

Chasing The Girl – Leia

Pairing: Buffy / Faith.

Rating: NC-17

Spoilers: All six series.

Disclaimer: I own no character but Rose. The rest belong to Whedon and Co. I'm just playing with them.

Notes: Feedback is not only welcomed, it's appreciated. I take every critique (good or bad) into consideration. Besides, it's the only thing that keeps me writing.

Summary: After six years Faith is summoned, as a last result, to New Orleans to help Buffy, and quickly finds that she is not the girl that Faith once knew.

"Fuckin A." Faith beat at the steering wheel as her car jerked forward. "Fucking dog." She muttered under her breath. 'Gone 30 minutes and I've already killed something.' She thought.

"If I believed in omens, that would have been shitty. Thank god I'm not the religious type." She pushed one black lock behind her ear. "And now I'm talking to myself as well. Well, what can I say? Faith, why the fuck are you doing this? Six years later and you're probably the last person she wants to see." She glanced at her reflection in the mirror. 'Six years didn't change much...' She thought, as she flicked her third cigarette out of the window. '...cause she's the only person I want to see.'

Six year ago, Faith left. She got off the bus in Memphis while the others were going for food, and she was looking for a way out. Before getting off the bus with the others, she left Buffy a note:

"I'm done. Not too much to hang around for. You know me, B, not the hanging around type. Life's for the living and we got a lot of that to do, not being the Chosen Two anymore. I'm thinking about getting my groove back, or finding my groove, you know that makes no sense, I'm just going away. You see, B, you and me, even if we're not the yin and yang anymore, we're still two halves. The way I see it, it's why we can't get along. Love/Hate and all that shit. Whoever said there's a fine line there had it right, cause there is, at least for me. Not to scare you or anything, but hey, I guess it doesn't matter cause I'm gone, but it was different for me than you, I mean. I wanted to be you, yeah, you got me there, but I wanted you more. To crawl into you and never leave. Not to play on my famed sexual innuendos but I wanted to be in you, physically, yeah, but emotionally as well. Shit I could have sex, I'm not afraid of that, but sex is sex is sex, I say. The fact that every time I look at you I want to devour you scares the hell out of me, but what scares me more, is I'd rather have you hold me and tell me things I know you'll never say. I want to promise the world to you, be the world to you. Cause you've pretty much always been it to me. I still can't come to terms with that, and well, rejection was never my friend. And I can't look at you everyday and ignore it. I would give my life for you to feel the same way, but I'm learning not to be so damn stupid. Now that I've spilled my soul, and pretty much told you shit you already knew, I'm gone. I hope you know if you need me, well, Red's a little more wicked than I remember with the Wicca stuff, so she can find me. Anyway, I asked her. Don't forget me, I'd rather you hated me. Love, Faith."

She put it on Buffy's seat and took off in the opposite direction that the gang went. She had gathered what little money she had and hitched to the bus station, and yeah, glutton for punishment that she was she headed to Boston and she never left.

'So much for seeing the world and all.' She thought. 'Get my groove back, that's a laugh, unless you count stripping as a groove, then okay, got it back.'

"Oh, who the fuck am I kiddin, one call from Red and I'm in my car and headed to New Orleans cause Buffy needs me, seems shit never changes." She told her reflection as she merged onto the interstate.

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Part 2

Faith pulled into the parking lot of the Harrah's Casino 24 hours after leaving Boston. The Casino, set on the bank of the Mississippi, was right in the middle of the city. Getting out of her car, she turned full circle checking out the scenery. 'Well,' She thought. 'B or no B, this might be a little fun. Nothing like being in a city known for taking it easy.' She pushed her sunglasses on top of her head and looked for the entrance.

2 Days Earlier.

Faith had just returned home from grabbing a pack of smokes when she noticed the light on the answering machine.

"Figures, no one calls me for days, I leave for 10 minutes and I get a message." She said as she pushed play.

"Faith, Willow, yeah I know, I found you, I already knew. I've kept tabs on you a long time. You never moved, so that was easy. So not the point of the call. Look it's a long story, but the point is Buffy. I need you, well she needs you, I mean I guess she needs, but she hasn't said, of course she wouldn't, she doesn't say..."

Faith would have been thinking something cleverly witty about the long-winded diatribe, but she had pretty much lost all feeling in her legs when she pushed play.

"Okay scratch all of that, Buffy needs help and you can help her. She doesn't know it, but we do. We meaning Ken and I. Xander pretty much said screw her this time, I mean she left a pretty big bruise the last time, and he's in a bad place anyway, self-esteem wise, a guy can only take so much, and well after the stuff with Dawn and her boyfriend, and then she forgives her and invites her to stay, and then the pool incident, oh god that was awful, well, in any case, we can't really count on her help anymore, plus I'm pretty sure we should have tried you first anyway. Oh well, live and learn. Anyway, Kennedy is giving me the signal to wrap it up, you can call me at work, I work in Security at Harrah's Casino, oh yeah we're in New Orleans, just figured I should tell you, just cause we know where you are doesn't mean you know where we.." BEEP.

And that was it. The message was cut off and no more. At least none Faith had waited around for, she heard:

'New Orleans, Buffy needs help' and where Willow worked. It was enough.

Faith stepped inside the casino and squinted at the flashing lights and noises that bombarded her senses.

"May I see some ID, miss?" The man at the entrance asked.

Faith eyed him. "What for?"

"Umm, standard procedure, ma'm."

"Oh, I just thought, 'He'll never mind.' Here." She fished in her backpack and got out her wallet. "Listen, do you know a Willow Rosenberg, she said she worked here, something about security?"

The guy was still eyeballing her ID and looking at her. 'Damn and it's really me, too.' She thought.

"Here." He handed her the license. "Willow, yeah, she's our assistant director of security, why?"

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"I need to see her."

"What's your name?"

"Dude, I just gave you my ID. Faith, member?"

"Oh yeah, okay. Hold on." He said. Faith watched him as he turned his back and mumbled something into his walkie-talkie. She was about to tell him he could find her at the bar that seemed to be calling her name with watered down drinks, when he turned around.

"Ms. Rosenberg is on her way." He said to Faith's departing back.

"Yeah well, I'll just be at the bar over there, so send her on over." Faith said, without even turning around.

Part 3

Faith ordered a beer and sat down at the bar. Propping her feet on the stool she swiveled around and faced the entrance. What she saw almost knocked her off her seat.

Willow, if it really was Willow and not some Alternate Universe Willow, which would have made more sense, walked up to her and hugged her.

"Wow Faith, I call and call, and I never get you and two days later you show up. I should have known better, I mean it is you, and the element of surprise doesn't surpass you. Yep, that's Faith, always one for surprising." Willow finally took a breath. "You look exactly the same. I mean your hair's a little longer, but, do Slayers age, I swear Ken still looks 17, makes me feel like a cradle robber."

Faith held up her hands. "Slow down, Red. Shit, let me get a look at you."

Faith eyed the redhead's ensemble first. Willow, in a short black skirt and tight white top shocked her...the knee high fuck-me boots, as Faith called them, sent her into a spiral.

"New wardrobe?"

"Oh, you know how it is, being professional and all." Willow answered.

"And the hair and makeup, nice, all grown up and stuff."

Willow's hair was shorter, layered, and with soft auburn highlights; and she had on a shade of lipstick that reminded Faith of Harlot, something she'd rather forget.

"Well, you know how it is, Faith. I mean, we grow up, right? I mean, most of us anyway." She said as she quickly looked down at her hands.

"Hey, Lisa." Willow called the bartender. "Give me a Gin Martini."

"Well, that's a grownup drink, Red, that's for sure." Faith eyed her as she sat down. "So, about Buffy."

"Yeah, so what have you been up to, Faith? I know you stayed in Boston, but why? No going out and finding yourself. No slaying duties taking you places?" Willow asked.

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"Way to dodge the subject, but yeah, I stayed in Boston. Worked some odd jobs. I would have thought, if I hadn't seen you, that my life would have shocked you. But you don't look easily shockable now."

Willow nodded.

"Anyway, I made a few friends, got in good with a few people and found a job bartending at some upscale hippy joint downtown. It's cool and I make decent money. After I cleaned Boston of the supernatural riff-raff, I figured I had to do something."

"Cleaned Boston?"

"Yeah, you know, word got around that one of the original Slayers was in town, made for some fast get away, figured I'd drive them all to Cleveland, let you guys deal with 'em. By the way, why aren't you in Cleveland?"

"We left Cleveland about a month after we got there. I mean it snows there. Did you know that? Snow sounds fun, but trust me when you're from sunny California it isn't. And with all the new Slayers, well, they had it pretty much tied up, they've got it all pretty much tied up."

"Yeah, I've noticed the lack of supernatural activity and figured I was just really scary, but I guess a hundred bad ass girls scares 'em pretty good, huh?"

"Well, there's still quite a bit in New Orleans, so Ken has fun." Willow answered, smiling at Faith.

"Ok, enough avoidance, Buffy?" Faith asked. She hated to make Red squirm and Buffy's name seemed to do that, but there was a reason she was here and she was getting antsy with the chitchat.

Willow avoided Faith's eyes for a few seconds, making Faith's tension meter rise dramatically.

"Buffy. You got a few hours, Faith, cause it may take me that long to explain it."

When Faith nodded, she continued.

"Look, I'm getting off in thirty, so why don't you hang around. Kennedy was gonna pick me up but I'll see if I can catch her. You can stay with us."

Willow noticed the protest Faith was about to make and held up her hand.

"No, don't, Ken's got money, remember?" Faith nodded. "As it is, we have four bedrooms. It's a big place. I didn't invite you to stay to throw you off in some motel. Let me call her. I'll meet you out front in twenty minutes."

Twenty minutes later, Willow sauntered out of the casino and looked around for Faith.

"Nice car," She said, leaning in the driver's side window. "but it's New Orleans and rush hour, plus you've been driving all night, and I know where I live, so scoot it."

Faith was too tired to protest and didn't really feel like driving anyway, so she relinquished her seat to the redhead.

Willow whipped out of the parking lot at breakneck speed and Faith hurriedly put on her seatbelt.

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'Fuck,' She thought. 'Red's the driver from hell.' And she fished around in the console trying to find her smokes.

"Bad habit." Willow observed, as Faith was lighting up.

"Yeah, well, it's the only vice I got. That's the first beer I've had in months, and I don't have enough money to gamble." She said, blowing smoke out the window, preferring not to look out the windshield as Willow dodged in and out of traffic.

"It's weird. You being responsible. I mean, no offense, but who would have thought you would get it together, and..."

Faith didn't know how to take that, and she was sure that it was an allusion to Buffy, but Willow never finished, as she was cut off by some driver, so Faith decided to wait.

Fifteen minutes later, Faith was trying to inconspicuously remove her fingers from the death grip she had on her seat as Willow slung her car into the circle drive. Faith opened the door, and on shaky feet, made her way to the house. Swearing that she was never, under any circumstances, life or death or otherwise, getting in the car with the redhead again.

"Nice digs, guys." Faith said, as she was escorted by Kennedy into their home.

She was a little intimidated, but wasn't going to let it show in front of another Slayer. Still, the house, with its circle drive and stone masonry, overwhelmed the girl. Not to mention the antiques which littered the hall and she figured the rest of the house as well.

"Thanks, it's a family house. I'd soon live at the HoJo," Kennedy said, taking Faith's bags.

"So, you hungry?" Kennedy asked, as they sat in the study.

"I'd really rather just get to it, if you guys don't mind. I mean it's good to see you and all, but I'm curious to know what the hell's the deal with B, and why I'm the only one who can help."

Willow glanced at Kennedy before nodding her head. "Yeah, I guess that's best. "

Kennedy grabbed Willow's hand and Faith felt a pang of loneliness at their comfortable affection.

"I guess we should start from the beginning."

Part 4

Faith sat for three hours and listened to Willow and Kennedy tell their story. She was tired, her legs were numb, and she desperately needed to go for smokes, seeing as after the first ten minutes she was smoking like a chimney. After they had finished, they admitted they were tired and were heading off to bed.

Faith asked if it would be alright if she left to get some cigs, and Kennedy gave her a key and told her she could walk down to the corner market. Willow started to protest, but yawning just nodded her head, remembering Faith was still a Slayer and could take care of herself.

'Jesus,' Faith thought, as she shut the door behind her. 'what the hell did you do, B?'

She thought back to what the girls had just told her.

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"After you left," Willow had started. "Buffy changed. I guess it was in Cleveland when we first noticed it, but it didn't escalate til we got here."

"What did she do?"

"She didn't talk about you leaving, it's like you weren't ever with us. I didn't completely understand that til I found the note you left her one night after we got to Ohio. I remember that I started to say something and she just looked at me and said 'Shut up.' That was the end of that."

"Yeah," Kennedy added, "we weren't even allowed to say your name."

"Anyway, Buffy didn't talk about it and we didn't ask. Maybe we should have. But as soon as the opportunity for New Orleans came up, we jumped on it. Hoping a change of pace would help. "

Kennedy chimed in again.

"We were all in a slump by then. Sick of Cleveland. Sick of the other Slayers. My parents had the house, so we decided it would be good. And Dawn went with Giles; so Buffy, Xander, Will and I packed up and moved here."

"Whoa, hold up, Dawn went to England with Giles?"

"Yeah," Willow continued. "Giles got her in to a public school there and we decided it would be good for her. We met with a little resistance, but she knew it was better in the end."

"So, anyway," Kennedy finished. "the four of us moved here. Willow quickly got a job with the casino. Xander found a construction company willing to hire a guy with one eye, and Buffy and I were going to split the slaying. New Orleans is full of baddies."

Willow stood up and walked to make a drink, she offered one to Faith who refused and then sat back down,

"Pretty quickly we realized who was doing the slaying and who wasn't. Kennedy was gone every night. Do you have any idea how many damn cemeteries there are in this city?" She didn't wait for Faith to answer. "Buffy was either sleeping or drinking, hanging out with some crowd she had ran across one night on patrol. We ignored it at first. Figured she was just trying to find the fun."

Kennedy added, "Xander stood up for her the longest. Said she never got to really live a life. Give her a break, that sort of thing. We sorta overlooked it. I mean Will and Xander were working cause they wanted to, we had plenty of money, so we just ignored it."

"Then Giles called," Willow said. "we'd been here a little over a year and Dawn was graduating. We had kept Buffy off the phone, making sure her conversations with Dawnie were short cause we didn't want to alarm them, but Giles and Dawn weren't stupid and they sensed something was off anyway. Giles thought it would be good for Buffy, for all of us, really, to attend Dawnie's graduation, so we all headed to England."

She glanced at Kennedy and then looked back at Faith. "We thought it would be a good idea at the time."

Kennedy finished for her. "It wasn't."

They had proceeded to tell Faith the whole story. The drunken plane ride. The indifference Buffy had in going in the first place. When they first saw Dawn and Giles; Willow swore Buffy was crying, but she quickly hid it.

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They were there for two weeks.

"A lot came out in those two weeks." Kennedy said, nodding to Willow. "It ended with Buffy seducing Dawn's boyfriend right in front of Dawn. In front of all of us. We were too stupid to see what was happening until later that night when we heard Dawn scream and we ran to Buffy's room."

"Yeah, Jack pulling up his pants, Dawn crying, and Buffy was so high she was actually laughing."

"Laughing? High?" Faith asked. "What was she really on?"

"What wasn't she on?" Kennedy said. "She had scored some high grade X the night before in some club she had gone to. With some chick she met on the plane. And then she and this dick were in her bedroom screwing and getting high. Dawn was just going to tell her goodnight."

"Needless to say the rest wasn't pretty." Willow sadly added, "Giles told us to go home and get Buffy help. She had done the unthinkable, as far as he was concerned, and that was hurt Dawn. He made us promise. We made excuses for her, but we were as shocked as he was, as Dawn. Only Xander didn't seem surprised."

"She didn't speak to us the rest of the way home. Xander told us that he had known that she was trying all this shit. Seeing how far she could take it. How he had gone to a bar with his buddies one night and he saw her going into a bar across the street. He said he was curious, so he followed her. Said she was 'leathered out' and then he knew why. Cause she was the main act in some sick and twisted sex show."

Faith looked at Kennedy. "And?"

"And that's all, he wouldn't tell us what she was doing. Said there was no need. We asked him why he felt he should keep that from us. He said he confronted her and she told him to mind his own goddamn business. He thought the trip to England would help. It didn't."

"So that was what, four and half years ago and you just call me?" Faith asked.

"Oh, we've only hit the tip of this iceberg." Willow said, and poured another drink.

Faith walked on to the store faster. Wanting, craving, her nicotine escape. She had gotten mad at Willow and Kennedy at that point in the story and she was regretting the tone she used with them. 'It's so easy to fall back into the role they want me in,' She thought. 'be the bitch, seems like B's beating me in spades in that area.'

Part 5

Earlier.

"Damn, Red, what the fuck is wrong with you guys?"

Faith stood up and started pacing the room.

Kennedy stood in an effort to challenge Faith, but Willow pulled her back down.

"This shit went on for a year and you let it go. It's a phase, and you overlooked it. Were you all high?"

Faith was pacing, smoking and wringing her hands. Kennedy looked ready to attack but Willow just sighed.

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"Faith, we were all in a weird place. It wasn't like we didn't want to help, but how do you help Buffy? You know how she is. We didn't know why she was doing it; we didn't know how to fix it..." Willow trailed off and started crying.

"Fact is, Faith," Kennedy said. "we really couldn't care."

"You didn't care?"

"No, I said we couldn't care. The First was still on our minds. Xander had lost Anya. We were tired. We just wanted things to go on and we couldn't deal with Buffy, too. When we tried to, and trust me the amount of times we tried is numerous, she made it seem like we were blowing it out of proportion. Like we didn't know what we were talking about. Always saying it wasn't a big deal."

Willow had stopped crying. "And we believed her, because we wanted to, because it made everything a little easier if we bought her excuses. Buffy is the strong one, Faith, you know that. Tell me what you would have done differently."

Faith thought, but did not say, 'I probably would have been in the thick of it.'

Instead she sat back down and muttered

"I don't know. So, what happened? If that was only the tip, where's the rest?"

Kennedy answered first.

"It went downhill and it went downhill fast when we got back. We tried the intervention thing. We begged her to see someone. 'Who?' She said. 'Oh, I used to kill vampires cause I was Chosen, now I'm one of hundreds, so I don't really have to anymore.'

'Who am I gonna talk to?' She asked us. She'd get all sad and weepy one minute then the next she'd just laugh like we were idiots and didn't have a clue what she was doing. She'd leave for weeks at a time, we'd never know when she was coming back. If Willow wasn't good with the tracking spells, we'd never know where she was."

"Where'd she go?"

"Miami, New York, Dallas, Mexico City, you name it, she was there. I could track her pretty easily, but I never told her. The one time I mentioned it, when I asked her what she was doing, she went off, told me to stay the fuck out of her business and to go ahead and shove my head back up Ken's ass." Faith looked at Willow stunned. "I swear that's what she said. What could I do? We were losing her and she wanted to be lost."

"That's when Xander said maybe we should let it be. We can't help her if she doesn't want it. So we did." Kennedy said, putting her head in her hands. "And she left and she didn't come back, not for two years."

"She was gone two years? Where?"

"Here. She was still here, but we didn't see her. We wrote her off and everything about her. Occasionally Xander or I would see her at the market or on the French Quarters. She ignored us and we ignored her. She built this whole other life, with another group of people, with a certain person."

Willow looked at Kennedy hesitantly as she finished. "She had made a new life and we were not a part of it, not in any way."

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Faith had held her breath at the mention of the other person. She wanted to ask who it was, who was the person that made B give up her friends, her life? What kind of hold did they have on her?

But she didn't.

"So, she has this whole life for two years and then she comes back. Timing still doesn't add up. This would have been last year, so what's the what? What happened between the time she left and now? Why did she come back? Why is she not here now?"

This time it was Kennedy who stood up and started pacing.

"His name was Malcolm. He owned a bar on the outskirts of town. Several, actually. They catered to the rich and eccentric. If you had money and knew what you wanted, Malcolm could get it. You think of the worst thing you can imagine, some sick fantasy of some twisted wealthy motherfucker, with deep psychological issues, and Malcolm could deliver. Buffy was in one of his clubs one night and he recognized her. Like I said, guy had connections. He knew she was a Slayer and he knew she was into alternative lifestyles. He also thought she was hot."

Kennedy looked at Willow as she rolled her eyes. "What? He did. Anyway, he courted her, took her all over the place, showed her what money and no inhibitions could do."

"And she loved it." Faith stated.

"Of course. By that time she was already into the scene and he was the master. He liked her. She liked him. It was only a matter of time."

"Before what?"

"Before they..." Willow said looking at her hands. "...before they got, umm, married."

Faith had stood up then, again, and slammed her hands on the coffee table.

"What?? Married? She married some sick psycho fuck who's into god knows what and you don't care?"

Willow moved to speak and Faith stopped her, trying to hide the thoughts running through her head. Married? What the fuck, married?

"I get it you wrote her off, okay. So she had this whole other life. What I don't get is why she came back? Why did she let this happen? Why...why did you call me?"

Willow could tell that she was on the verge of tears and got up and sat down beside her.

"What do you want to know first? Why we called you? It was after she came back. She was drunk and she hit Kennedy hard, out of the blue, and she screamed at her:

'Why'd you leave me? What did I do? You're the big bad girl and all you do is run away. Run. Run. Run. You're a scared child.'

"It took us a minute to figure out she thought Ken was you." Willow said, looking Faith in the eye. "That was a few weeks ago, before she took off again, after all the others, the worst part, and I debated for a few weeks and realized I should call you."

"Faith," She said, turning the girl to face her. "she's going to do something. It's only a matter of time before she hurts someone. Before the damage she causes becomes permanent."

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"Already is, in my opinion." Kennedy said. "After what she did to Rose. I don't know how Wills even wants to help her."

Before Faith could ask "Who's Rose?" Willow jumped in.

"It's because of Rose I want to help her, Ken. Jesus, we have a chance, it may be our last but it's a chance."

Faith watched the exchange dumbfounded. "Who's Rose?"

Willow picked up a photograph from the coffee table. It had fallen over when Faith slammed her hands on it earlier. In it was a picture of a little girl.

"Her daughter."

Part 6

Buffy finished snorting the line and looked over at the woman laying face down on her bed.

"Hey," She said, crawling on top her. "you're not sleepy, are you?"

"Yeah, a little." She slurred.

Buffy brushed the long black hair off of her back.

"Stop it, I'm tired." The woman mumbled again.

"No, you're not." Buffy said, as she laid her body on top of the girl.

She ran her hands down the side of the girl's breast and felt the catch in her throat as she tried to breath.

"Still tired?" Buffy asked.

"Not really." The girl said as she tried to turn over.

"No no." Buffy said, as she held the girl, pulling her arms above her head. "Trust me, you'll like it from behind, F."

"What did you call me?" The girl asked.

"Nothing, Maddie. I didn't call you anything, I said you'll like it." And with that Buffy captured the girl's mouth with her own, starting her hands back down the girl's back.

Last Year

'Shit, it's hot.' Kennedy thought, as she pulled her convertible into the driveway. 'And I'm sick of being hot. I think I may see if Will wants to ...'

"What the fuck?" She suddenly asked herself aloud as she got out of the car.

There, on her doorstep, was a very skinny, very tired looking Buffy and she was holding a baby.

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"I was wondering when you guys were coming home. It's hot as hell out here." Buffy said standing up. "You gonna open the door or what?"

"Buffy, what the fuck, umm are you doing here? And who's that?"

"Look, Kennedy, can you just open the door and let me in and I'll explain everything. Where's Willow?"

"On her way home, I think."

"Good, then I can tell you two at the same time."

Ten minutes later a stunned Willow and an only slightly less stunned Kennedy were sitting in the kitchen watching Buffy trying to feed the baby a banana and waiting for her to talk.

Buffy started with the story of Malcolm, how they met, what he did, and finally who the baby was.

"...and this is Rose." She continued. "She is ours, was ours, cause Malcolm's dead now, you know." She looked away.

"No, Buffy." Willow spoke for the first time since she had started. "We don't know anything."

"Well, I didn't really love him and I honestly don't care, except that all the money's gone and we don't have anywhere to go."

All this while Buffy was still trying to get the baby to eat, but she was busy playing with some pots she had found in the lower cabinet.

"I've never even fed her," She said, looking at Rose. "we had someone to do that."

And then she broke down.

"I'm so fucked, Will. I don't know how to function anymore. All I want to do is score, and I have this kid, shit she's a year old, and she doesn't even recognize me. She just stopped crying when Ken pulled up, she doesn't even know I'm her mother."

When Buffy finished, the little girl looked around at hearing the word mother and said "Momma" and proceeded to cry.

"See?" Buffy said. "She's looking for her momma and that was never me."

Willow got up from where she was sitting and walked over to Buffy who was crying into her palms, making the child cry even harder.

"Who took care of her, Buff?"

"Greta, some woman Malcolm hired. He said Rose got in our way, and she did. Shit, Will I don't even really remember being pregnant. Everything's a blur."

"How did he die?"

"They came in one night and just started shooting, I don't even know how they got past security. Greta ran into the room holding Rose and we ran. Malcolm was busy looking for his fucking gun...and

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well, he got his. We made it to the car when a bullet hit Greta. I caught Rose just in time, she was so close to being hit. I jumped in the car and drove off."

"Who were the guys? Where's the car?" Kennedy asked, as she picked Rose up and bounced her on her hip.

"I don't know. Someone he had a bad deal with. They don't even know my real name. Don't care, probably. It doesn't matter, I have no way of claiming any of Malcolm's things and as far as the world is concerned, she..." She said pointing to Rose. "...she doesn't exist. As far as the car, I drove it to the airport, bought two tickets in my assumed name with the cash I had on me. Took a cab to the Garden District and walked the rest of the way here."

"Damn, Buffy, how did you get mixed into this? I mean, we knew," Kennedy pointed to Willow and herself. "that you were in some serious trouble, don't think we didn't. But this, this is like high-powered shit. Malcolm Cole was a serious bad guy. Even I know that. I had no idea you were with him."

"Yeah, well, it didn't do well with his connections to know Malcolm was married. Or fake married, seeing as we used an assumed name and fake birth certificate, to a Slayer. It doesn't matter, the guy was an ass."

"The guy was an ass?? This is what you've got to say?" Willow screamed, the baby started crying so she quieted down. "What the fuck were you doing married to this guy and having a baby that you said 'got in your way' if the guy was an ass? What is wrong with you? I mean, who are you? What do you want from us?"

"I married him cause he had what I wanted and I was what he wanted." Buffy said, as she looked out the window. "And I almost died because of it, worse yet, I almost killed an innocent child, my child." She said as she held her hand out to the baby, who instantly started to cry. "I need help, please Will, please help me."

Buffy fell on the floor and wrapped her arms around Willow's waist, crying into her stomach.

Kennedy, sick at the display, took Rose and left the room.

"We're going to the store. The kid's gonna need things. I'd ask you what size she wore, but I bet you wouldn't know." She said, and Willow gave her a sad look.

"Look, Will." She said, ignoring Buffy who had slid to sit on the floor, head in her hands, crying. "She's asking for help, and I'm all for helping. Just not her. This little girl," She pointed to Rose, who was busy playing with her hair, "well she's done nothing and doesn't deserve this. She definitely doesn't deserve her." She said pointing to Buffy. "So, I'll help her." She said pointing to Rose. "And if you want to help Buffy, well that's your choice. Maybe Xander can pull the slack, cause I'm not going to."

Kennedy turned and walked out of the kitchen, leaving Willow standing there staring down at Buffy.

"Get up." She said, Buffy looked up at her through tears.

"I said get up, Buffy." She grabbed her by the hair, knowing the Slayer in Buffy could knock her across the room but not caring.

"Get up. Get up. Get up!!" She screamed.

Buffy crying, pulled herself up on shaking legs.

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"I don't know why I'm doing this," Willow continued. "cause you screwed up. Big time, Buffy. You are not the person I loved, not my best friend. But I'll help. But you're gonna play by my rules or you leave."

Present Day.

Buffy slid her hands around Maddie's body, grasping her breasts.

"Shit, Buff."

"Shut up." She said as she licked her neck.

She moved her hands lower, her head on the girl's back, listening to her breathing.

When she touched her clit, the girl moaned and was about to speak. Buffy used her other hand to grab the girl's hair, jerking her head up.

"Don't talk." She said, as she slipped her hand down and forced her fingers inside.

She sat astride her, pounding her fingers inside her, pulling her up by her hair. Maddie's breathing was becoming labored and she knew she was close. She could feel the heat pulling her in. She drove her hand faster, her palm working the girl's clit all the while.

Maddie was humping her hand. Buffy pulled her head back further and licked the girl's ear.

"Come." She said, and Maddie did.

Hard.

After she finished, Buffy rolled over and lit a cigarette. Maddie tried to snuggle into her.

"Get the fuck off me." She said and pushed her off the bed.

"What?"

"You heard me, get the fuck off me. While you're at it, get your shit and get out."

Buffy was looking out the window, not even acknowledging the girl.

That is until she climbed back on the bed.

She picked Maddie up and threw her into the door.

"Get out. You don't know me and you don't want to." She said, and the girl grabbed her clothes and ran naked into the hall with Buffy slamming the door behind her.

She ran her hand through her hair and looked for the bottle of wine they had consumed earlier. She took a drink, and too tired to care about much, laid down on the bed and fell asleep.

Part 7

Last year.

Buffy had played her part.

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That night after she had left, Kennedy called Xander and went to his apartment. She had explained what was wrong over the phone, not surprised when Xander didn't seem shocked. She had gone to the store and was planning on staying with the kid at Xander's until they decided what to do.

The next morning, Buffy, Willow and Xander boarded a plane for Atlanta.

They were going to a hospital, famous for its rehabilitation of drug abusers. It didn't take much prodding on their part to get her to go, because she knew she needed help.

The plane ride was silent and so was the check-in at the hospital. The only thing Willow said was

"Get yourself together, Buffy. You've got responsibilities now."

"I'm not the only Slayer, not anymore." She said, looking behind Willow out the window.

"Yeah, and she wasn't talking about slaying, Buffy." Xander answered for Willow. "Get your shit together. Cause this is it, as far as I'm concerned." And he walked out leaving the two girls alone.

Willow hugged her and Buffy tensed at the awkwardness of it.

"I'll come get you, when you're better."

Buffy watched as Willow turned and walked away, making sure she was gone before breaking down in complete sobs. 'How the hell did I get here?' She thought.

Present Day.

Faith was walking slowly back from the store, looking around for anything to beat the shit out of.

'You know,' She thought. 'any other person and I would be gone before the word rehab ever got uttered. Why do I want to save Buffy?'

And then her thoughts went back to the child.

'Rose? Good god, she's got a kid. Two years old and she doesn't even really know her. Do I want to? I mean, this is too much, a baby, drug dealers, phony marriages, what the hell was she doing here? I am way out of my element.' She thought.

She walked a little more and then mumbled to herself.

"Like it fucking matters. All they had to do was say her name and I ran." She thought back to Willow's final explanation.

Earlier.

"She was in the hospital for eight months." Willow paused at Faith's cocked eyebrow. "I know that's a long time but she wanted to stay and they weren't completely sure she was cured. Turns out they were right."

"So what happened?"

"Well," Kennedy started. "she came back and she was gone. I mean she was here, but she was a zombie. She would sit in a chair all day long. Or just stare out the window. We even tried leaving Rose

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with her once. Just for an hour, just to see how she would react. Rose was screaming when we got back."

Willow finished for her. "And Buffy hadn't even moved from the chair." She looked at Kennedy before continuing. "We thought Dawn could help. She'd visited once for a while, just to see Rose, so we called her and asked her to come."

"The meeting was tense," Kennedy said, "but Dawn seemed to be helping. Buffy was saying more than yes and no, or thank you, so it was an improvement. She even talked her into going swimming. So we thought we'd make a day of it. Cook out in the back yard, Will was getting pretty good with teaching Rose to swim," She paused when she noticed Faith's smile. "but that is when the proverbial shit hit the fan."

"The pool incident." Faith said.

"Yep, the pool incident." Willow answered.

"Dawn was laying on a float in the deep end and I was inside getting Rose some water. Xander and Ken had gone to the store for something, so they were the only two outside with Rose. Buffy was laying on a lawn chair. I just assumed she was watching her and then I heard a splash."

Faith looked away, pretty much guessing what Willow was going to say next.

"No, Rose didn't drown, if that's what you're thinking."

Faith exhaled the breath she was holding.

"But she could have. She walked right to the edge and jumped in. The pool's pretty big and Dawn was screaming for Buffy to help, she was trying to swim to her, but Buffy just looked at her, looked at Rose, and just stared. I came out in the middle. Dawn was pulling Rose out of the water. Rose was screaming, Dawn was crying and Buffy was just staring. I picked her up and Dawn walked over to Buffy, still sitting on the lawn chair, and slapped her. I mean hard, it knocked her back. Then she came over to me and said 'I'm leaving. I can't help and I can't take care of her.' I'm still not sure who she meant, Rose or Buffy. She just looked tired and mad. She said we allowed her to get this way, and we should fix it. And she left. "

Kennedy picked up.

"Xander and I were pulling up as the cab was leaving. We tried to stop it, but...she must have told him to go on. When we got to the backyard, Buffy was sitting there, tears rolling down her cheeks and Willow was soaking wet, rocking Rose. It was a sight. Buffy just got up and left."

Kennedy got up and stretched her arms. "She was gone for a week and when she came back she was drunk, she slapped me, told me I ran away, that's where she was talking to you, I think. She came to get Rose, she said, Xander was there and he was holding her. He told her she was crazy and to get the fuck out and she knocked him, enough to send Rose flying out of his lap and him onto the floor. She picked her up and tried to leave but Will stopped her."

"What did you do?"

"I told her to go ahead and ruin her life if she wanted, but don't ruin Rose's. She looked at me and for a moment I thought she was gonna say ok or you're right, but she just said 'Bitch' and handed me the baby. Then she said 'I didn't want her anyway' and she walked out."

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Faith stared at the two girls, stunned. "That's it, she just left?" They both nodded. "So where are they now? "Buffy? Rose?" Faith found that the little girl's named sounded funny on her lips.

Kennedy answered. "Buffy's still here. Tracking spell is still on, but we haven't contacted her." She looked at Willow. "I didn't want to even tell you."

"And Rose?"

"Oh, Ken took her to Xander's after I called. We didn't really want to spring her on you like that. Not til you got the whole story."

Faith stood for the umpteenth time that night and stretched her legs.

"Ok, so why did you call me? I mean we all know how I felt about Buffy, but this isn't B. What can I do?"

"Faith." Willow said. "If you love Buffy half as much as you say you do, you'll help her. Find her, talk to her, I still think maybe you're what she needed, maybe if we had called you, sooner...I don't know, she's still Buffy, she's in there, I know, I can read her, but I'm not the one who can help her, I'm not her other half."

"Yeah, well I'm starting to think I'm not, either." Faith said, as she lit her last cigarette.

"Maybe, maybe not, Faith," Willow said. "but did you love her? Do you still?"

Faith sighed and nodded her head.

"Then you have to help her. If you don't wanna do it for her, do it for Rose." Willow, said as she handed the photo back to Faith.

Faith looked at the chubby baby in the picture and felt a knot rise in her throat, she looked up at Willow and nodded.

"Of course. Tell me what I need to do?"

Part 8

Faith woke to an incessant banging on the front door.

"What the hell?" She said out loud as she walked sleepily out of the room. Looking on the pillow before leaving, she found a note:

"Faith, had to take Will to work, some sort of problem arose. Shouldn't be gone long. Xander's off today, so it should be okay. Get yourself something to eat and call if you need anything. K."

"Okay, okay. Hold on, jeez, what time is it anyway?" She said glancing at the clock.

"8:00. Okay, that's not normal." Faith said, as she rushed to open the door.

"Faithie," Xander said, pushing past her. "long time no see, how's life?" She started to reply. "Really? That's good, you think they have any food here?" Faith had just noticed the little girl, 'Rose', she thought, as Xander walked past her into the kitchen.

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"You know, I'm a bachelor. Yeah, the bachelor's life for me. So I have no breakfast sustenance, I actually have nothing but cheetos and beer and grape juice, which, as you can see, the little devil spilt all over her shirt. I mean, come on, purple juice? What were the girls thinking? Don't they make clear grape juice or something?"

Faith was too busy staring at the little girl, who up until that point had her head hidden in Xander's shoulder.

The little girl picked that time to speak. "Hungry." She said, pulling on Xander's shirt.

"I know, Rosie, let me see what they have." He opened the fridge, handing Rose to Faith.

"Okay, eggs. You want eggs?"

She shook her head no.

"What about toast?" No again. "Well, we'll just go get breakfast then, once we change your clothes. Where're the girls?"

Faith handed Xander the note.

"Oh, you wanna go eat with us?"

Faith was still staring at him, holding a giggling Rose about two feet away from her body, suspended in mid-air.

"Umm, Faith, she doesn't have a disease, or anything." Faith looked at him and cocked an eyebrow.

"I mean, if you had more clothes on, not that I'm looking or anything, cause no offense, but way past lusting over Slayers, seems to get me near killed and all, but she's not really gonna get juice on the top." He said pointing to her. Faith figured out what he was saying and pulled the child on her hip.

"Yeah, I'm not good with babies, Xander." She said, looking at him like that was enough.

"I not baby." Rose chose to speak again.

"Of course you're not." Xander said, as he took her from Faith. "How about I help the little lady change, and the big one can change on her own, and then we'll all go get breakfast. My treat?"

They got back to the house about ten, with no sign of Kennedy or Will.

Faith had to admit breakfast was a treat, alright.

Just not the one he meant.

Seems the kid has her mother's demeanor, throwing a nice temper tantrum when she didn't get her juice. It took both of them to calm her down, and by that time Faith had lost her appetite and really just wanted to grab a smoke and go back to bed.

"Shit." She heard Xander say, as she stubbed out her cigarette and went back inside.

He had not mentioned Buffy and she hadn't asked. She marveled at how easy it was for him to pretend the girl didn't even exist.

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"What is it?" She asked.

Rose was on the floor coloring, and Xander was hanging up the phone. He looked at her pleadingly.

"Oh no, didn't sign up for that. You gotta stay here til the girls get back." Faith said, guessing what he was gonna say.

"I'm sorry, Faith, site emergency. I called Ken and they'll be home in an hour or so. I just changed her, she's fed, and she'll probably just take a nap."

"No nap." Rose said, looking up from her coloring.

Xander was backing up, hands in the air.

"Don't do this, Xand, I'm still a Slayer and I can kick your ass."

"You'll be fine. Like you said, Slayer and all, what's one little girl?"

'Jackass.' She thought. 'I never said that.'

When he had shut the door, she looked at Rose, who had noticed the exchange and was about to cry, still timid of Faith.

"Oh, come on, don't do that." Faith said, as she scooped the little girl up. "Come on, how about I rock you a little and sing a song, huh?"

The little girl nodded shyly.

"Good."

Faith sat down in the chair and started to sing. "Wait. Can't sing that song." She said. "No, I can't sing that one, either." She said, thinking all of them over, one by one. "You know, Rosie, I don't know any song that's not about sex, or, well, that's all I know are sex songs. I'm a good role model, huh?" She asked, hugging the little girl who was staring at her amusedly.

"Sex." Rose said, staring up at Faith. "Sex, sex, sex." She sang.

"Oh, no, don't say that." Oh crap, Red is gonna kill me. "Let's not say sex."

"Sex." The little girl repeated, singing and clapping her hands.

"No no no." Faith said, trying to control her breathing, "How about puppy? Can you say puppy?" She asked trying to get the little girl to change her song.

"Puppy sex." Rose countered.

"Shit, Shit, Shit." Faith said.

"Shit." Rose smiled at Faith.

"Okaaay, no more words, huh?" Faith said getting up and setting the little girl down on the ground. "You don't want Red to get me, do you?"

The little girl shook her head.

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"How about we take a nap?" Faith tried. 'Anything to change the subject.' She thought.

"Nap. Couch." Rose said.

"What, you wanna lay on the couch?"

"You lay down." Rose told Faith.

Faith walked over to the couch and laid down.

"Like this?" She asked the little girl. Rose nodded and climbed onto her stomach.

"You wanna sleep here with Faith?" Faith asked.

"Sleep with Faith." Rose copied, as she laid her head on Faith's chest.

Faith put her hands tentatively around Rose's back and rested them there. Then the little girl wrapped her chubby arms promptly around Faith's chest and fell asleep.

Faith peered down at the little girl nuzzling on her chest.

'Shit, B.' She thought. 'What were you thinking, fifteen minutes and the kid has me wrapped around her fingers.' She softly rubbed the little girl's back, humming.

As she fell asleep, her mind drifted.

'Well, there's no way I can ever get back to Boston now.' Faith thought, still rubbing her back.

"Well, Rosie, guess you hold the new record for making me fall in love the fastest. Even got your mom beat." Faith mumbled to herself, as she closed her eyes.

Part 9

Faith quickly pulled on her clothes thinking about what she was about to do.

'I'm going to go get her, that's what I came here to do, to help, and I will, I'm gonna help.' She was trying to reassure herself that this was still a good idea.

"Faithy." She heard Rose call from her bathroom.

She went in and saw the mess Rose had created.

"Oh, shit, that's a little too much lipstick, don't ya think, baby doll?" Faith asked, picking up the little girl and setting her on the sink counter. "Let's wash it off."

"No, pretty, see?" Rose said, smiling a very red, very large smile.

"Yeah, okay, pretty, we'll just let Willow wash it off later." Faith answered, thinking 'I'm a fucking sucker, huh?'

Earlier.

Willow and Kennedy had gotten home at lunch to find Faith and Rose asleep on the couch.

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"That Xander." Kennedy said. "Always one to do our bidding."

"Yeah, looks like it worked. We'll have to thank him later." Willow answered. "It could have ended up like when we left her with Buffy. Or worse."

"Oh, please, you knew she was gonna do fine. She's probably already wrapped around Rosie's little finger." Kennedy whispered.

Faith opened one eye.

"You know, being a Slayer and all, Ken, seems like you would remember Slayer hearing. So you set me up, huh?"

The hovering girls giggled.

"Well, then you won't mind that I taught her a couple of new words."

At this admission, Rose chose to wake. She looked at Kennedy and Willow and rubbed her eyes before laying her head back on Faith's chest.

"Shit." She mumbled. Kennedy burst out laughing and Willow threw a large throw pillow at Faith's head.

"Good job, potty mouth." Willow said.

"Thanks, Red, always glad to help." Faith countered, throwing the pillow back.

Faith spent the rest of the day playing with Rose, avoiding the subject which was bound to come up. After taking a bath and giving Rose one as well, which she had ruined with Faith's lipstick, she got dressed and brought the baby out into the living room.

"Give me the place, Red." Faith said looking at Willow.

"Are you sure you wanna do this tonight, Faith? I mean, you've only been here one day?" Willow asked her already knowing the answer.

She wrote down an address on a sheet of paper and Faith didn't answer, but put Rosie down on the floor.

Kennedy had sighed and gone to get something to clean her face, mumbling something about being a sucker Faith's way.

"Here. She's in this vicinity. I figure a couple of those clubs are to her liking, anyway, that's where I tracked her, I think Slayer mojo, you know the tingling and all."

Faith nodded. "Well, I figure that will do the rest."

Faith bent down and gave Rose a kiss on her forehead. "See you in a little while, sweet baby." Rosie smiled and clung to her leg, making Faith weak in the knees. Kennedy grabbed her and told her they needed to wash up.

Faith turned to leave and Willow called behind her. "Don't let your guard down, Faith. She's still a Slayer. And remember she's not the Buffy you know."

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Faith nodded, sighed, and walked out of the house.

Faith walked into the club.

'Will was right, gotta love that Slayer mojo.' She thought, as she handed her ID to the bouncer.

When she finished she walked to the bar scanning the room.

'Come on, B, I know you're...'. She didn't finish her thought as her eyes came to rest on the back of a girl dressed in a skin-tight red and black corseted dress.

'B.' She thought. Even though she couldn't see her face, and her hair was shorter, she knew it was her.

Buffy turned her head to the side and peered over at Faith.

With one hand crossed against her chest and the other holding a cigarette to her lips, she motioned with her head for Faith to come over.

If Faith could have formed a cognitive thought, she would have been remembering how strong the link between her and Buffy really was. As it was, though, Faith was having a hard enough time telling her legs to move as she walked across the smoky bar in the girl's direction.

She stopped to the left of Buffy, who had never taken her eyes off her, and smiled.

"Hey." She said.

Buffy, for her part, only looked at Faith, not seeming surprised, not seeming really anything, as she motioned with her other hand.

"Leave." She said.

Faith was about to protest, when she noticed the blond wasn't looking at her anymore but at the girl sitting on Buffy's right. It was the first time Faith had seen her. Though she had her head on the table, Faith could see her hand resting on the inside of Buffy's thigh, and she suddenly felt an urge to remove it, forcefully.

"Leave, Julie." Buffy said again.

The girl got up and left. Letting her hand trail through Buffy's hair when she moved, but she made no protest, only staring at Faith and smirking before walking away.

Buffy turned her entire body to face Faith, placing another cigarette in her mouth.

Before she could go for her lighter, Faith lifted her own, and Buffy clasped her hands around Faith, protecting the flame. After it was lit, she motioned with her other hand.

"Sit down, Faith." Buffy said, pointing to the chair opposite the one Julie had been sitting in earlier.

Buffy looked over at Faith and smiled. "Where you been all my life?" She asked, resting her head in her right hand.

"Boston," Faith answered, lighting her own cigarette. "least the last six years."

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"I'm guessing this wasn't a coincidental meeting. I'm thinking this is your kinda club, but hell, they have those everywhere, don't they?" Faith nodded. "So with my impervious powers of deduction I can discern that my child stealing ex-best friend called you. Am I right?"

"Got it in one." Faith answered, taking another drag. She was staring at the dress Buffy was wearing, at Buffy's dark red lips and nails. "Stealing my style?" Faith asked.

"Please, Faith, you could've never pulled off this dress." Buffy said smoothing her hands down her chest. She quirked a half-smile when she noticed Faith's eyes following her hands. She stood up and moved in between Faith's knees, her hands behind her back, and leaned in and whispered into Faith's ear.

"It's a little crowded in here, Faithy, let's say we go back to my place." She said before licking the side of Faith's ear.

Faith tried to hold the breath that escaped her like a strangled sigh.

"Umm, okay." She said.

Buffy grabbed her hand and drug her to the back stairs before leading her up. Faith was following, her eyes glued to the back of Buffy's dress, she could feel the sweat on her palms. Buffy turned and smiled at Faith before opening the door to a room at the top of the stairs.

"Come in." Buffy said, turning around and facing Faith. "I don't bite. Not hard, anyway."

She laughed and Faith followed her into the room, sitting down in a chair facing Buffy's bed. Buffy sat down across from her on the bed before getting back up and sitting in Faith's lap, straddling her knees.

Faith kept her grip on the chair's arms and stared at Buffy, still too stunned to speak.

Buffy put her hands in Faith's hair and leaned down to whisper in Faith's ear again.

"What took you so long, F?" She asked.

Faith pulled back, looking at B.

'What the fuck am I doing?' She thought, before leaning in.

Part 10

Faith waited, her face inches from Buffy, who was busy staring Faith back in the eye. When she was just about to lose her nerve, the blond grabbed her hair and pulled her back, licking down the side of Faith's neck. Faith leaned back in the chair, hands still on the sides, as Buffy licked her way down and back up Faith's throat. She was trying to tell herself to stop the girl, to pull her hands out of her hair and get up, but Buffy leaned back and Faith opened her eyes.

"Don't close them." Buffy said, and Faith stared at her, watching as Buffy moved in to kiss her.

It took all of her strength not to close her eyes.

Buffy was sucking on Faith's lip, pressing her tongue against the outside of Faith's, waiting to be let in. Faith closed her eyes and Buffy stopped.

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"Open your eyes." She said, and moved her hands to Faith's thighs.

Faith, for the most part, couldn't do anything but sit there and pry her eyes open staring at Buffy.

"Better." Buffy said, before attacking Faith's mouth again. This time full force, still looking deep into her eyes.

Faith was fast moving past uncomfortable at being stared at, to hot at being so dominated by Buffy. Any rational thought left her when she moved her hands to Buffy's side and Buffy grabbed them.

"You need somewhere to put these?" Buffy asked, holding Faith's hands to her chest.

Faith nodded.

Buffy ran her hands along the back of Faith's, and taking them, she grabbed Faith's breast. She squeezed and Faith's hands mimicked her actions.

"Do you like to touch yourself like that, Faithy?" Buffy asked, biting Faith's ear, before coming back around to stare into her eyes again.

"No, open them Faith, don't close them again. Look at me." She took Faith's hands and ran them up the brunette's throat, down her chest and back up to her breasts.

"I like to watch you touch yourself, Faithy. How many times have you done this thinking it was me, hmm?"

"God, B." Faith said, having a small moment of clarity, when Buffy started to lick the side of her throat again.

"Umm, B...oh god, B, please, I think we may need to...ughh." She said, as Buffy ran her own hands around Faith's thighs before grabbing her ass and pulling Faith into her.

Buffy spread her legs and rubbed herself suggestively on Faith's lap, all the while cupping Faith's ass, grinding faster and constantly kissing and licking any skin above Faith's neck she could find. Faith moved her hands to Buffy's thighs, causing the girl to relinquish her hold on Faith and lifted her up. She pulled herself up, face to Buffy's breasts, which were beginning to more than spill out of the corseted top.

"That's it Faith, I like it rough, bite them." She said, pulling her breasts free from the dress and looking at Faith.

Faith let the rush of the moment get the better of her and she licked softly before nipping in between Buffy's breasts.

"Oh god, that feels good, harder, I need it harder. Hurt me Faith, make me bleed!" Buffy was practically screaming at Faith, pressing her head to her harder. "I need to be hurt Faith, hurt me." She said, as Faith slowed down and then stopped to look up at Buffy.

"B?"

"What are you doing, did I say you could stop?" She asked, slapping Faith across the cheek. "Do what I say." She said, grabbing Faith's head and looking down at her.

"No, B, get off me. You're freaking me out." Faith said, trying to remove Buffy from her lap.

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"Oh, really?" Buffy said, grabbing Faith's crotch and shoving a hand down the front of her pants. She brought it up and licked it.

"Looks like you liked to be freaked out, F."

Faith took that moment to throw Buffy off of her and she landed on the bed.

"What the fuck is up?" Faith asked, staring down at her.

Buffy was lying on the bed, looking at Faith, she rose on her elbows and laughed.

"I always knew you were scared of me. Can't take it, can you?"

Faith bent down on her knees in front of Buffy. "Buffy, come on, tell me what I can do?"

"Well, Faith, you could have fucked me. That would have been fun." She said smiling at her.

"I'm sorry." Faith said, standing up.

"For what? Please, I can fuck whomever I want. You're not even a challenge, really," Buffy said standing .

Faith felt the words hit her face like Buffy had punched her.

"Not for that, B." She said. "You're pretty much right, there, on both accounts."

Buffy smiled knowingly. "Then for what, Faith, for being such a coward? Not taking the one thing you've always wanted." She said, pressing her body back into Faith's.

"No, for this." Faith said, as she punched Buffy in the face.

Part 11

Faith was amazed at the ease that she had in taking Buffy out of the club.

No one had even hinted at the fact that the dark haired girl was essentially kidnapping her. 'Probably glad to see the crazy bitch outta there.' Faith thought.

"Crazy bitch is right..." Faith mumbled, pulling Buffy into the passenger's side of her car. "...and I'm not sure which one of us it is."

She looked over at Buffy as she pulled out of the lot. She seemed to still be out of it, probably cause she was stoned out of her mind.

"Jesus, that's gonna leave a nasty bruise." She said out loud looking at Buffy's face. "Not unlike these here on my neck." She finished looking at herself in the rearview.

Faith drove for about an hour heading east out of the city. She wasn't thinking about where she was going or the fact that neither of the girls had a change of clothes, and it didn't even cross her mind that she had just basically kidnapped a badass, drug addicted Slayer, whom at any point was probably going to wake up and kick her ass.

No, Faith was just driving, intent on getting as far away from New Orleans as possible before the girl woke. She had just turned the radio up, thinking 'this is a good song', when Buffy stirred.

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"Malcolm?" Buffy asked, raising her head.

"Nope babe, just me." Faith smiled at her, as Buffy whipped her head around.

"Christ, F, way to punch someone." Buffy said holding her head. "It's gonna bruise, too. I'm taking it that you didn't get any of my stuff when you carried me out, huh?" Buffy asked.

Faith looked at her stupefied.

"Umm, no, I was kinda in a hurry, didn't have time to think about your makeup." Faith finished, "Why ya not mad, B?"

"Oh, about you punching me, yeah, well, life takes us strange places, and it wouldn't be the first time." Buffy said, looking out the window. "You got a smoke?"

"Yeah. Here." She handed her the cigarettes. "You know, B, I know I did some crazy shit to you before, but unless I'm suffering from some memory loss here, which is highly likely, don't get me wrong or anything." Faith countered taking a lit cigarette from Buffy before continuing. "I don't think I ever punched you in the face and kidnapped you. Not while you were trying to seduce me, anyway."

"Didn't say it happened with you. Just said it happened." Buffy said, still blowing smoke out the window. "Nothing supprises me anymore, Faith. Guess it's better you than some guy with a pair of pliers." She finished.

Faith decided not to question what that was about and kept on driving instead, wondering where the hell she was going.

"Willow! Shit." Faith exclaimed after a few minutes. "I need to stop and call her, tell her I got...have...tell her you're with me."

"Fuck Willow." Buffy said, still staring at anything but Faith.

"Why?"

"Why fuck her? Oh, I don't know, she and that little lap dog she has stole my child. I think that's grounds enough to say fuck her." Buffy said, the first hint of anger touching her voice.

"Not the way they tell it, B. Way I hear it, you got drunk, knocked Xander around, almost let Rosie drown, and then told Wills you didn't want her anyway. Plus the little lap dog, as you refer to her, is basically supporting your child. I would think you would be a little more understanding. Oh, wait, no I wouldn't."

"Rosie?"

"What?" Faith asked.

"Oh, nothing, Rosie is all. Just you've been here one day and you're already calling her by her little Wiccan nickname. Did you fall for her like they did? One look at that little face and you saw me, and just knew this little girl had stole your heart?" Buffy asked.

"Don't be a bitch, Buffy. She doesn't even look that much like you. Her dad must have been dark and handsome, cause when we went to eat, the waitress thought she was mine."

"Her father was a dick."

Chasing The Girl – Leia

"Yeah, well, her mother sounds like a bitch. Does it make you feel good to talk about your child like that? Do you think your foolin me with the hardass routine or the mother who doesn't care. Shit B, I had one of those and you're outta your league there." Faith gripped the steering a little harder.

"You did fall for her, didn't you?" Buffy taunted.

"Yeah, she's a cute kid. Not that you'd know. It took a while though, to be honest, she was a little shit at the restaurant. But when we got back, when it was just me and her, well, I've never had a kid fall asleep on top of me like that, with her little arms wrapped around me like she was afraid I was going to leave her. It didn't take much for me to love her, not after that."

Buffy looked down at her hands. She was barely whispering. "I did try, you know."

"Yeah, Will said you tried a whole two weeks. Look at you. Supermom." Faith couldn't hide the disdain in her voice.

"I deserved that." Buffy simply stated.

Faith cracked then. She pulled the car off the road.

"Fuck, B, you deserve a lot more than that. You deserved them taking her away, not letting you see her. You deserved me knocking your ass out. You deserve me leaving you here on this fucking highway and going back to see your kid. Cause I gotta tell ya, I'd pretty much rather be with her right now, than in this car with you." Faith released her grip on the steering wheel and turned back towards the window. "Buffy, you need to make up your mind, as it is, you've pretty much depleted any sympathy I had for ya. But, I came here to help you. And I think I still want to, but these mood swings, you need to pick a personality and stay with it. That little freaky sex display earlier and now this little admission of guilt, I'm thinking you don't know what you want. I will help you. My reasons for doing so may have changed or at least been altered, but I will help, but you've got to want it and you've got to mean it. Cause I'm not Red, and when I say you're getting one chance, I fucking mean it."

Buffy turned her head away from Faith and laid it back on the seat, there were no tears, no rebuttals, not one act of defiance.

"I've been waiting six years for your help, Faith, I'm not about to turn it down." She said, and then closed her eyes. "Wake me up when we get to wherever it is you've decided we're going."

Faith started the car and didn't reply, just pulled back onto the highway and drove off.

'Where we're going? That's the \$64,000 question, isn't it?' She thought.

Part 12

"Ok," Faith said. "where the fuck are we?"

Buffy mumbled in the seat next to her before raising her head.

"How the hell should I know?"

"Ok, first of all, it was a rhetorical question. Second, can't really get rid of the bitch mode, can ya?"

Buffy started to say something when Faith cut her off. "And third, shut the fuck up and go back to sleep."

Chasing The Girl – Leia

"Mississippi." Buffy said.

"What?"

"Missi-ssip-pi." Buffy said, speaking slowly.

"Again, huh?"

Buffy rolled her eyes. "We're in Mississippi. See the signs." Faith glanced at the road.

"Oh." She mumbled.

"Okay, Faith, as much as this little road trip is amusing me, when are we going to stop?"

"Now." Faith said, sharply turning into a parking lot of a motel.

"Okay." Buffy said, holding onto the door.

"Look, I'm gonna get a room. Look in the trunk of my car and see if there's anything we can sleep in, in there." Faith told her, getting out.

"Aren't you afraid I'll leave?" Buffy asked.

Faith leaned back in the car.

"Look, sister, you're walking a real thin line here. If I come out here and you're gone, I'm getting back in my car and driving back to New Orleans. I mean, you're making it pretty easy for me to tell you to fuck off. Don't give me a reason."

"Whatever." Buffy sighed, as she got out of the car. "How the hell do you pop the trunk?" she asked.

The girls walked into the room and Buffy threw the clothes on the bed.

"You always keep things to wear in your trunk, Faith?"

"Yeah. I don't ever know if today is a good kidnapping day or not. A girl's gotta be prepared." Buffy rolled her eyes.

"I'm gonna take a bath."

"Ok, I still need to call Willow."

"Sure." Buffy deadpanned.

"Uh, B?"

"Yeah?"

"When will it start?"

"When will what start?" Buffy asked back.

"The withdrawals. You know, from the drugs and shit."

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"I've never had them."

"What? Not in rehab?"

"Nope, figured Slayer metabolism and all, it runs through my system too fast."

"So, you're not really addicted." Faith stated and Buffy gave her a questioning look, "If you were addicted, you'd have the withdrawals."

"I guess." Buffy shrugged.

"You mean to tell me you've been doing this, all this time, and you're not addicted."

"I don't know, Faith, it just felt good. I did what felt good."

"Go take your bath." Faith forced out.

"What's wrong?"

"Look, Buffy, I'm about two seconds away to slamming you through that wall - 'it just felt good.' You are fast making me reconsider this whole deal. I was wondering what it would take for me to get over you. Jeez, if I had known it was spend a few hours with the new 'feel good' Buffy, I'd been down here years ago. As it is, the thought of hurting you keeps entering my mind, and I'm starting to think it's too bad I'm reformed." She said, clenching her fists.

Buffy shrugged again. "Do what you have to Faith. If you think you can." And then walked into the bathroom and shut the door.

Faith picked up the vase sitting near the phone and slung it against the wall before picking up the phone to call Willow.

Willow hung up the phone and looked at Kennedy.

"Well, apparently they are somewhere outside of Biloxi, Mississippi." She said, "Faith sounded a little strained, but she said everything was cool."

"Well, at least you didn't have to do the tracking spell," Kennedy answered. "and it's probably good she didn't kill her or anything." She added.

"Which one?"

"Oh, I am thinking the murderous tendencies could go either way with those two." Kennedy said.

"Well, anyway..." Willow said, ignoring her. "I talked her into coming back. She said to call Giles, see if maybe they could come here."

"Why? You actually think that'll work? I mean Dawn pretty much...I don't know, everyone is sick of her, Wills, I don't even see Xander driving across town for her."

"Maybe. Faith said she needs tough love."

"Ohh, does that count physical pain, cause I'm up for that. I should've slugged her that night she left."

Chasing The Girl – Leia

"No. You can't hit her. I'm not really thinking that's what Faith meant. As a matter of fact, I don't really think Faith knows what she means. She didn't describe how she got Buffy to go, but it sounded like it wasn't exactly voluntary."

"I guess we'll see." Kennedy said, she looked at Willow and sighed. "We're Queens of Second Chances, aren't we?"

"Way I look at it," Willow said. "somebody has to be."

Buffy came out of the bathroom dressed in the shirt and shorts she found in Faith's trunk.

She had removed the makeup she had on, and Faith felt a pang of remorse, staring at Buffy. She thought she could see the old Buffy there.

It didn't last long.

"Rush Tri Delta." Buffy said, looking down at the shirt she had put on. "Didn't know you were in a sorority, Faith. I didn't even know you went to college."

"It's been six years B, there's a lot of things you don't know about me." Buffy raised her eyebrows. "Ok, I wasn't in college, doesn't mean I wasn't in Tri Delt."

"The sorority?"

"Well, maybe just one of their sisters." Faith said.

Buffy smiled. "Do I want to know?"

"Not really here to talk about me, are we?"

"I guess not, but why are we here?"

"I don't know. We should go to bed." Faith answered.

"And then what?"

"And then tomorrow we're gonna head back to New Orleans."

"Dare I ask what that little trip will entail?"

"Well, if you don't want to know then I wouldn't ask." Faith said, taking off her jeans and getting into the bed opposite of Buffy's.

"You can sleep with me." Buffy said. "I really won't bite this time."

"I'd rather gouge my eyes out." Faith said, lying down and turning away from Buffy. "If it's all the same to you, that is?"

"That mouth is gonna get you into trouble one day." Buffy said, lying down as well.

Part 13

Buffy and Faith pulled into Willow's driveway late the next afternoon. They had slept well past lunch and only awoke after the telephone had rang.

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"Hello?" Faith said groggily, looking over at the same time, relieved to see Buffy was still asleep.

"Faith?" Willow asked on the other end. "You guys haven't left yet?"

"We haven't even gotten up."

"Oh, well I was just checking, making sure everything was okay. I was worried, not that I had reason to be, I trust you and all, but you said you were coming back, and it's after one and yet, still you're not here, but you were asleep, so that's cool."

Faith cut her off.

"We're fine, Red. We'll be home soon. Bye." She said, and hung up the phone. 'Damn that girl can talk.' Faith thought. She got up and walked over to Buffy.

"B..." She said, gently shaking the sleeping girl. "B, get up. Let's go."

Buffy rolled over and looked at Faith. Faith was expecting a protest or at least some witty banter, but Buffy just rose and sighed.

"Okay." She said simply.

Pulling in the driveway, Faith glanced at Buffy and noticed her gripping the seat.

"It'll be okay. Let's get it over with." It was pretty much the longest sentence they had said to each other the entire ride. After thirty minutes of awkward chitchat about the difference in food in New Orleans, Buffy fell silent and Faith allowed it.

She chose not to look at the girl while she was driving, only glancing over once. Buffy was crying, silently, looking out the side window. Faith thought that it would be wise to ignore it and she did.

Faith opened the door to the house and peeked in.

"Honey, I'm home." She called to the house. Buffy was standing behind her, half hiding her small body with Faith's.

"Faithy." They heard Rose call, running into the room, Willow close behind.

"Slow down, Rosie, you'll spill your...juice." Willow was saying as the little girl splashed the juice all over the floor in her effort to get to Faith.

"Ken!" Willow shouted, staring at Buffy. "Bring a towel, she spilled her juice."

"Hey, baby doll." Faith said, as she picked up Rose. "Miss me?"

Rose put her hands on Faith's face. "Yep." She said, nodding emphatically.

Kennedy walked in with a towel.

"Faith..." She said, ignoring Buffy's presence, but not the look Willow was giving Buffy.

"...next time you teach Rosie a song about puppy sex..." She held up a hand as Faith started to speak. "...don't, cause I don't want to know. I'm just saying next time, give us a heads up first, I was

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talking to my grandmother on the phone and little Rosie was singing a song that gave Nana a nice little mini-stroke."

Willow, still staring with sad eyes at Buffy finally spoke to the girl.

"Hi, Buff." She said, looking down at her hands suddenly.

Buffy walked into the room from behind Faith. Faith was struck by Buffy's sudden lack of bravado as she answered Willow.

"Hey, Wills." She said, alternately looking at her and Rose in Faith's arms.

Faith was kissing Rose on the face and the little girl was giggling. Buffy noticed something in her hands. 'Mr. Gordo'... She thought. 'I forgot I even left him here.'

"What you got there?" Faith asked Rose.

"Mista G." The little girl said, looking at Faith. She suddenly had become timid when she saw Buffy and raised up and whispered in Faith's ear.

"She mean." The little girl said, pointing at Buffy.

Willow wondered what Rose had whispered, but thanks to Slayer hearing, Buffy had heard her just fine. She fought the sudden overwhelming urge to run back out the door.

"Sorry." She said, patting the stuffed animal and frowning. "I used to have something a lot like this when I was little." Buffy said, smiling slightly at the little girl.

Rose jerked the stuffed animal away from Buffy's hand and turned the other way.

"It mine." She said to Faith.

Kennedy and Willow stared hesitantly at Buffy, expecting the worst. Before Faith could answer Rose, Buffy said

"Of course it is. It's a pretty little piggy, isn't it?" She said gently, laying her hand on Rosie's back.

"Putty little piggy." Rose mocked, smiling at Buffy.

Tension averted, Faith smiled. "Why don't we get something to eat? We haven't really eaten anything that could be considered real food."

"Food." Kennedy said. "I forgot. I ordered Chinese. I'm gonna pick it up. Wanna go, Rosie?" Kennedy asked.

"Yep." She nodded, hopping out of Faith's arms.

Kennedy smiled. "We'll be back shortly." She said.

Faith looked at Willow and then Buffy.

"Guys, I don't mean to be the deserter and all, but I didn't get a shower last night and I feel dirty. Do you mind?" She asked, looking between them.

Chasing The Girl – Leia

"Go on." Both girls answered simultaneously.

Faith turned around and walked out of the hall, leaving the two girls staring at each other across the room. 'Hope she doesn't kill her,' Faith thought to herself. 'hope they don't kill each other, actually.'

Part 14

Faith pressed her forehead against the shower wall.

'I'm not weak,' She repeated in her head. 'I'm not weak.' For the first time since she came to New Orleans, she really wanted to cry. She had spent all last night thinking about her encounter with Buffy, at the club and in her room. 'I almost screwed it all up. I was so close to letting her, Jesus,' She thought. 'I could have made it worse.' She ran her hair under the showerhead letting the soap and shampoo run down her back.

"I'm not weak." She said out loud, one more time, before getting out of the shower.

Willow and Buffy were sitting across from each other at the breakfast table in the kitchen.

Neither had spoken since Faith had exited. When Willow had turned to go into the kitchen, Buffy had just followed her.

Buffy looked down at her hands. "Did you want me to come back?"

"I don't know. Faith thought it was best, to bring you back here, I couldn't argue with her."

Buffy nodded. "You called her?"

"Yeah, a few days ago. I debated it for a while. I wasn't too sure I wanted to drag her into this. There was no point in hurting anyone else. And I didn't want to sacrifice Faith's feelings on a shot that you might reach to her."

Buffy was about to speak.

"No, let me finish. I decided to call her because I couldn't give up on you. God knows I wanted to. I really wish I could just forget you, Buffy, but with the constant reminder walking around in the form of a two year old, well that's not easy. And no matter what you've done, Rose is still you're daughter. We would have had to deal with that at some point. I'd rather it be sooner than later."

"So you wanted me to come back so you could tell me you were taking my child?" Buffy asked, getting bolder. "Haven't you already done that? Taken her? She wouldn't even look at me."

"I'm surprised you care." Willow said.

"I'm not a fucking monster, Willow. If you want to believe that, than it's fine, but I'm not."

"Nobody said you were a monster, Buff. But you are messed up. You have messed up. Not just your life, but ours as well. Mine, Ken's, Xander's, especially Rose's, and now we run the risk of Faith's as well. Do you think it's worth it?"

"Do you? You're the one who called her. You're letting me back. Am I worth it?" Buffy asked, "I'm so sorry I've screwed up your lives. Forgive me. Guess we're even now."

"How's that?"

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"I saved them enough, didn't I?"

"Get off of it, Buffy. Yeah, you saved our lives. We know it. We've paid for that, god, have we paid for it." Willow answered exasperated. "After all of this time, it's still all about you, isn't it? I can't figure out when our worlds became yours. It seems everything was, and fucking is, still about you. Like you're some goddess on an throne and we are there to please you."

"Shut up, Will." Buffy said rising. "You have no idea how hard it was. I was responsible for everyone around me. One misstep and that was it. You would've all died. No one seem to notice or care half the time. Don't you know that I knew it would have been easier if I'd have never met you guys. If I'd lived the solitary life I was supposed to. But I was selfish, I wanted to feel loved. I'm sorry for that. If I'd known how much I was screwing up your lives, I sure the hell would have dropped you."

Willow rose too.

"You did drop us, Buffy. Remember. You ran, you, not us. We tried to help and you ran away. From me, from Rose. I'm sick of this sanctimonious bullshit attitude you have." Willow came closer, her voice rising. "It is not all about you! Wake up and Grow up! You have a child. You are not Chosen anymore! And no one gave you a reason to screw up your life but yourself, so fucking deal with it!"

"I knew this was a mistake. You'll always judge me. Miss Holier-Than-Thou, Willow. No one better! Willow would never do this, Willow would never do that. Willow's raising her druggie friend's baby! They should saint her!" Buffy shouted.

The tension in the room was getting thicker and neither girl was backing down.

Kennedy heard the shouting and ran into the room, Rose close behind.

"What the hell is going on here?" She shouted, grabbing Buffy's arms.

"Let me go, you bitch." Buffy spat in her face.

"No, not until you calm down."

"Oh, let her go, Ken. She can run back to her rock and crawl under it. We can't help her. We're not good enough." Willow looked at Rose who was standing in the doorway crying.

"Oh, Rosie, it's okay, shush. Don't cry."

Faith had heard the screaming and Rose crying in the other room, she ran in, seeing Kennedy holding Buffy's arms, and Willow trying to calm Rose down.

Faith took the child and rubbed her back, telling her it was okay. Kennedy dropped Buffy's arms and all three girls stared at Faith. She sat down at the table, Rose in her lap.

"Does everyone feel better now?" She asked, laying her forehead against Rose's. No one answered. "Somebody better answer me." She said. "Do you all feel better? Justified or whatever. I'm sure she does." She said, pointing to Rose.

They still didn't say anything, so she stood up.

"Buffy come on. We're going out to eat. Willow, you and Ken eat the food she brought and take a breather. Everyone needs to calm down."

Willow made a move to take Rose.

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"No, she's going with us."

"I don't think so, Faith." Kennedy said.

"I do." She said. "You two need to calm down, and there is no way in hell I'm leaving her here with you."

"What about her?" Kennedy said, pointing to Buffy.

Buffy was about to say something, but Faith stopped her.

"Hush." She said, looking at Buffy. She turned to face Kennedy.

"She needs to calm down as well. But me, see I'm calm and Rosie wants to go with me, don't ya?" Rose nodded. "Besides..." She said looking between the girls. "...maybe it'll be good for the two of them. I'm also not giving you a choice in the matter."

Buffy left the room to change.

"Listen, Red. You two, get over it. There's a time and place for that, but it's not now. You're gonna be blaming yourself when she runs. I hate to say it, but we're just gonna have to take her sh..." She looked at Rose. "...stuff for a while. I know you wanna punch her. It's about all I have wanted to do since I found her, but," She hesitated. "be the better person. Don't let her trap you. You're just feeding her that way."

Faith grabbed her bag and Rose's as well. "We'll be back in a couple of hours. Don't worry about the kiddo. Buffy knows where I stand on that subject, and anyway, I don't think she'll do anything. I really think she wants to fix this. We have to give her a chance." Faith finished and walked out of the room.

"When the hell did Faith start making all the sense?" Willow asked Kennedy, sitting back down.

"Yeah, well, Faith hasn't had six years of this shit, Wills." Kennedy answered.

"Somehow, Ken," Willow said, watching as the girls departed. "I don't think that would've mattered."

Part 15

"Hope Kennedy doesn't mind us taking her car." Faith said, buckling Rosie in the back seat.

"We go for a ride?" Rose asked Faith.

Faith nodded and got into the driver's side, Buffy answered her.

"She's probably more pissed that we're taking her kid." Buffy said getting in.

"Your kid, B. Not theirs, yours. They will have to face that sometime and so will you." She said, looking at Buffy before starting the engine.

"I think Faith's right about controlling ourselves around her," Willow said, picking through her food. "at least until we decide when and how we are going to confront her. And I guess that should be with the rest of the gang here."

Kennedy nodded. "I called Xand."

Chasing The Girl – Leia

"What did he say?" Willow asked.

"Pretty much what we thought. You've got to be fucking kidding. No way in hell. Why is she there? You're letting her near Rosie? Are Dawn and Giles really coming? Do you think Faith's stable enough to solve anyone else's problems? They were all pretty much rhetorical questions from there on out. Are you crazy? That sort of thing."

"So he's not coming?" Willow asked.

"Don't think so. He was pretty adamant about it. He said she was a selfish bitch, and that we didn't deserve to be treated this way."

"He may change his mind." Willow said with tinge of hopelessness.

"He may, baby, you know how he is. We should give him some time. Maybe you can talk to him, or Faith."

Willow looked at her food.

"I'm not even hungry." She said before continuing. "I don't think Faith will help, at least not with him. She pulls with him what she pulled with us a moment ago and it may not be pretty. Those two have a tendency to not be able to control their tempers around each other."

"Things change." Kennedy said.

"That's what I keep telling myself." Willow answered.

"Does no one in this town eat at home?" Faith asked bouncing Rose on her lap. They were waiting for a table.

"You should have said first available. It would have been faster than non-smoking." Buffy said, standing beside them.

"We can't smoke around the kid." Faith said looking up at her.

"Oh, I forgot." Buffy added, uncomfortably.

"This thing's buzzing." Faith said, holding the beeper up to Rosie.

"Buzz. Buzz." Rose said.

"That means a table is ready." Buffy said, looking at Faith.

"Oh, thank you, Buffy. I forgot, seeing as I'm a mentally deficient social pariah who never eats out." Faith answered, standing up.

"What?" Buffy asked. "You looked confused."

"That's my smoldering look. You should get them straight. "

"I'm sorry, I'll have to pull out my intricate files on Faith's looks and read up. I'm not current with the Faith lingo anymore." Buffy said, smiling at Faith.

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"Well, get them out. These are things you need to know. I'm a complicated girl, and it's good to have notes." She said, following the hostess to the table.

"Wonder when they'll be back?" Willow asked, putting away the dishes.

"They haven't been gone that long, Wills."

"I know, I'm just worried. What if it was all a ruse and now Buffy and Faith are gonna take Rosie off and go do drugs or something. They may join the circus. Don't look at me like that. They're Slayers, they can do all sorts of circus-y things. And you know how much Rosie loves animals. She could ride the horses in the show. We'd never hear from them again. Except when it comes back to town, and they're all dressed up in pink and red sequined outfits swinging from the rafters and stuff. Or they could..."

"Whoa, hold up." Kennedy said knocking on Willow's forehead. "Are you okay in there?"

"I'm sorry, I'm being stupid. I'm a worrier, I know." Willow smiled. "Besides, I think maybe there was some MSG in that food."

"They stopped using that a long time ago, babe." Kennedy laughed.

"Yeah, take all my excuses." Willow laughed back.

Buffy sat down while Faith strapped Rose in a highchair. She pushed the seat over next to Buffy.

"What are you doing?" Buffy asked her.

"You wanna sit by mommy?" Faith asked Rose, ignoring Buffy.

Rose just looked at Faith. "I wanna cracker." She said.

"Get her a cracker, Buffy." Faith said, sitting down opposite them.

Buffy unwrapped the crackers and handed it to Rose.

"No, da good ones." She said, pointing at the crackers.

"Oh, ok the good ones." Buffy said, getting another kind. "Here, this better?" She asked Rose, handing it to her.

"Yep." She answered, smiling at Buffy with crumbs all over her mouth.

Faith watched as Buffy wiped the crumbs off of Rose's cheeks and smiled.

They looked at the menu, trying to decide what to order.

"What do two-year olds eat, B?"

"I really don't know Faith, what's on the kids menu?"

The waitress popped in, listening to their exchange. "The spaghetti's good." She smiled down at Rose.

"Ghetti, ghetti." Rose said clapping her hands.

Chasing The Girl – Leia

"She'll have the spaghetti." Both girls answered at the same time.

An hour later, Buffy and Faith walked out of the restaurant with a giggling Rose holding their hands.

" 'Oh, the spaghetti's good.' " Faith mimicked the waitress, in a high voice. "Said the sadistic waitress from HELL. Are we idiots or what?" She asked, still wiping her shirt.

"Not sure why you're complaining, Miss-I'm-gonna-sit-across-the-table." Buffy said, shaking her head. "It's actually in my hair. I mean, look, I can feel it."

"Hold me?" Rose said yawning, and looking up at the girls. Faith and Buffy both bent down at the same time.

"Go ahead." Faith said, smiling at her. "She's a little too saucy for me anyway." Faith tickled the little girl as Buffy held her.

"Rosie's saucy." Rose said.

"Looky what I have, Rosie." Faith said, pulling a chocolate mint she got from the restaurant out of her bag.

"Don't you dare." Buffy said, still holding Rose.

"C'mon, B." Faith said, opening the paper and handing the candy to Rose.

"Mmm shocolate, wanna bite?" She held the half eaten candy to Buffy's face, and before she could answer, smushed it on her lips.

"Take bite, B."

"Umm okay, take bite. See?" Buffy said, licking it off her lips. "Dirty trick, Faith." She said smacking Faith on the arm.

Faith was about to answer the giggling girl, when she heard someone.

"Buffy?" They said.

Both girls turned around and Buffy soon got quiet.

"Let's go, Faith." She said, turning back to the car.

Faith still stood there staring at the woman who had called Buffy's name, wondering who she was.

"Let's go Faith, now." Buffy said, slamming the passenger door.

Part 16

Faith drove out of the parking lot. Rose was sitting in the back, saying "BBBBB".

"What?" Buffy asked, turning around.

"Want Mista G." She said.

"Here, don't get him dirty." Buffy sighed.

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"I not." She snapped, jerking the animal. "He mine."

"Of course, I know, I'm sorry, Rosie." Buffy said.

"He mine." Rose said again softly.

Faith looked at Buffy.

"Have some patience." She said, before smiling at Rosie. "You're a sleepyhead, aren't you?" She asked her.

"I sleepy." Rosie said, and yawned, laying her head on the side of her car seat.

"So?" Faith asked. "Who's the girl?"

"Mary." Buffy stated.

"And?"

"Mary. We sorta dated." She looked at Faith's questioning expression. "Ok, we sorta screwed, more than once, which to me was dating."

"Watch the mouth." Faith said, looking in the rearview at Rose. Rose smiled at her.

"Hey, Faithy." She said.

"Hi, baby." Faith said, before turning back to Buffy. "And? Why the running away?"

"Not too sure how comfortable our little encounter would have been. Me walking up with a baby and all."

"Yeah, I guess you're right. But you can't run away from it, B. It's still there. Who would have been uncomfortable, you or her? Cause if it was her, I'm gonna have to say who cares. If she was bold enough to play with the 'feel good' B, and more than once, well she's not one who I care to impress anyway."

Buffy looked away hurt.

"I'm sorry, but that's true. If you were the one who's uncomfortable, well get over it, I mean we can have a dinner and talk and play with the kid, but again it's still there. You did a lot of damage, you're gonna have to face it or it won't go away."

"Don't you think I know that?" Buffy said. "I just ...tonight was nice, I mean, at least after we left Willow's. Can't I just have that? Just for one night?"

"I don't see why not."

"At least Rose's not scared of me anymore."

"Yeah, that's something. But it will still take time. The rest of them are not going to be as easy to convince that you are willing to change as a toddler is." Faith said. "I'm not sure I'm convinced myself." She finished, softly.

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"I figured as much, Faith. I'm not denial girl. I know they hate me. I know you're pretty close to hating me as well. I am going to try to fix this mess, but I don't know how much more I can take."

"I think you need to look at it this way. Think about what Red and Ken and Xander think about what they have done for you. The begging, the pleading, the cleaning up your messes. Think about that. They have taken a lot more than you, and they may be a little bitter, but they're also willing to take some more. So, if Wills gets testy or Kennedy gets angry, my advice would be to shut up and listen. Most likely they're speaking the truth, but I'm guessing you already know that." She paused for a beat. " And... I don't hate you. May not like you very much, some of the time, but I don't hate you, and I don't think that they do either."

Buffy nodded, suddenly tired. She glanced in the back seat.

"Looks like our baby's out." She said softly. "I'm thinking she has the right idea."

Faith didn't answer her, glancing at Rose again, and then at the side of Buffy's head as she laid it on the seat staring at Rose.

'Our baby, fuck, why does this girl do this to me.' She thought.

Willow and Kennedy were waiting up when the girls got home. Kennedy saw the headlights pull into the drive.

"Fuck, did you know they took my car?" She asked, as they were getting out. Willow shook her head and Kennedy finished. "Here we were getting all upset about them being gone, and they took my car. What would have happened to the poor baby, if they HAD joined the circus. What do you think, Wills? He would have missed me, and they would probably just have abandoned him on the side of the road. I think those circus people travel different, you know, like on a train in Dumbo, oh no, no the poor baby. Oh, do you realize how close we came to disaster here? I'm glad I didn't know. Just keep me in the dark with things like that, okay?"

"You're real funny, Ken. A comedian. Really. I'm so glad you still have your humor." Willow said. "It's so utterly useless sometimes, but still so cute."

Faith and Buffy chose that moment to walk in. Buffy carrying a sleepy Rose. The two girls stopped giggling when they saw Rose in Buffy's arms.

"I'm going to put her to bed." Buffy said, walking out of the room.

Kennedy was too stunned to speak, so Willow went first.

"Wow, I guess they hit it off, huh? Well, that's good. I know that they should hit it off. Her being her mother and all. Mothers and daughters should get along, we all know that, right?" She didn't wait for anyone to answer. "And Buffy's Rosie's mother, so the getting along is of the good, I have to say. She should put her to bed. That's really great."

Willow continued to babble and Kennedy rolled her eyes and Faith stared. Before she could speak, Willow changed the subject.

"Did you have a run-in with the pasta monster from hell again, Faith?"

Faith looked down at her shirt. "The pasta monster from hell is a two year old that sleeps in this house. You guys really should have known that, seeing as you're a powerful Wicca and you're a Slayer. But no, she goes unnoticed, until little ole me takes her out for food. Completely unaware that

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she changes from the cute little button she was to a mini-volcano intent on destroying the dining outfits of everyone within a 20 foot radius of herself."

"Spaghetti?" Kennedy asked.

" 'Ghetti, want ghetti.' " Faith answered, mocking Rose.

"You are so totally a sucker, Faith." Kennedy said.

"I know." She said, holding her head down in mock embarrassment.

Part 17

Buffy was busy trying not to wake Rose while changing her diaper and clothes, and of course that didn't work.

"Hey." She whispered, when she saw the little girl open her eyes. "Go back to sleep, huh?"

"I sleep with you." Rose said, rubbing her eyes.

Kennedy peeked in about that time. "Kenny." Rose asked. "I sleep with B?"

Kennedy caught her breath for a second. "I don't know, baby, why don't you sleep in here?"

Rose started to cry. "I sleep with B." She said this time.

Kennedy looked at Buffy, who was looking anywhere but at her. "Is that okay, Buffy?"

"Umm, yeah, it's cool, if you don't care." Buffy said.

"Alright then, you can sleep with Buffy. Goodnight." She said kissing Rose on the top of the head, before walking out of the room.

Willow and Faith were still up talking.

"So are they coming?" Faith asked.

"Yeah. They'll be here tomorrow afternoon at some point."

"What did they say?"

"Not much, just that they would help. Or Giles said he would, anyway. I think Dawn's getting forced." Willow answered.

"And Xander?"

"He says nope, no way in hell." Willow told her. "But who knows?"

"Well, we can't force him." Faith said. "I didn't tell her." Willow nodded. "I just didn't want to spring it on her and the timing really wasn't right."

"I understand, but you need to, or someone does, at least at some point before tomorrow afternoon. I'm going to tell Rosie goodnight."

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Kennedy heard her as she walked back in the room. "She's sleeping with Buffy."

Willow looked down. "Oh, well I'm just gonna go to bed, then. Night, Faith."

After changing, Faith went to Buffy's room 'just to make sure everything is okay', she told herself. Rose was jumping on the bed, with Buffy holding both her hands.

"Thought you guys were going to sleep?" Faith asked.

"Not sleepy." Rose answered.

Faith looked at Buffy, who smiled. "I think it's bed time." She said looking at Rose.

Faith picked the girl up and swung around before laying her down on the bed, Rose giggled and grabbed Faith's hand.

"Faith lay down too." Rose said.

Faith blushed. "I think I'll sleep in my room." Faith said.

"No here." Faith looked at Buffy who shrugged.

"Okay, but just for a little while, til you fall asleep." Faith said.

Buffy laid down on one side and Faith laid down on the other, Rose grabbed both their hands and tucked them under her stomach and laid down as well.

Buffy looked over at Faith. She was busy staring at Rose's little face, who had her head turned Faith's way. Buffy closed her eyes and went to sleep.

Kennedy walked by Buffy's room the next morning and saw Willow standing at the open door staring. She looked inside as well.

Rose was laying on top of Faith's chest, much like they had found her the other morning. Faith had one hand on top of Rose's back and the other under the blanket. Buffy was lying on her side, one hand under Rose's chest and on top of Faith's. Her forehead was resting on Faith's shoulder.

"Guess Faith slept in here, as well." Willow observed, looking at Kennedy.

"You know, I don't know whether to find that cute or disturbing." Kennedy said.

"You read my mind." Willow said, walking off.

Buffy woke first.

She tried to turn over before opening her eyes, when she noticed someone was holding both her hands. Rose had one, on top of Faith's chest, Buffy thought. And Faith had the other, or rather she had Faith's, and she was holding it between her thighs.

'Oh, this is great, Buffy.' She thought. 'How am I gonna dislodge myself without waking Faith?'

Faith looked down at Buffy's forehead. Why am I still in this room? She wondered.

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Why is Buffy's head on my shoulder? And why is my hand between her legs? She was beginning to panic. Buffy had slowly removed her own hand, leaving Faith's resting on her thigh.

'Oh shit,' Faith thought. 'she's awake.' She slowly slipped her own hand out as well.

"Sorry, B." She whispered.

"S'okay," Buffy whispered back. "my fault, anyway."

"You Summers girls are a lot alike." Faith mused, looking down at Rose.

Buffy kept her head on Faith's shoulder, not looking at her.

"When I was little, I used to sleep in bed with my mom and dad," Buffy started. "they finally stopped it. Apparently, I couldn't sleep without touching someone constantly. Mr. Gordo became my security after that."

"Maybe she's afraid someone will leave her." Faith stated.

"I know I was." Buffy countered.

Part 18

As Buffy was taking a shower, Faith brought Rose into the Kitchen.

"Did you tell her?" Willow asked, taking Rose from Faith.

Faith was busy making coffee. "Not yet, but I will."

"You should. Like now. They're gonna be here tonight, and well, it shouldn't really be like a surprise party. I guess. I don't know, should those types of things be surprises? You know they did that intervention with Bailey."

Faith and Kennedy were now just staring at Willow.

"You know on Party of Five, and it was a surprise. Of course, it didn't turn out well, so maybe we shouldn't do that..." Willow trailed off, thinking.

"Okay, Red, no more coffee for you." Faith said. "I'll go tell her."

Buffy was getting dressed. 'I can't believe I curled into Faith like that, in the middle of the night. When is the last time I've actually slept in the bed with someone anyway, where sleeping was the primary goal?' She wondered to herself.

Faith knocked on the door. "Hey B, can I talk to you?"

"What about?"

"Well first of all, sorry about falling asleep in here. I didn't mean to. I'm worn out." Buffy nodded. "Second, Giles and Dawn are coming." She rushed out.

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"What??" Buffy asked. "Did you say Giles is coming, and bringing Dawn?" Faith nodded. "That's what I thought you said. When?"

"This afternoon."

"Thanks for warning me, Faith. I would've hated having been prepared." Buffy said. "Don't give the flight risk a reason to run away. It'd be easier just to spring it on her." She finished in a mocking tone.

"That isn't why we didn't tell you. Hell, we just found out. It's not a personal attack, B. But you're attitude changes so quickly...we just thought it was for the best. " Faith finished.

"I'm glad you people have so much interest in what is for 'my best'." Buffy said. "What would I do without my own personal set of guardian angel friends?"

"You'd probably be dead." Faith deadpanned back.

"I'm just wondering, Faith." Buffy said, letting her anger get to her.

"What's that?" Faith countered.

"How does it feel to swoop in here and save the day. I mean they couldn't fix it, could they? So they call you, as a last resort mind you, to come in and 'help me.' I mean, that must be pretty good for the ego, right? Helping Buffy. The one person who never needed help. The one person you've always had a thing for, and now she needs you. How does that feel? Do you feel vindicated? Do you feel superior now that I've fucked up? Do you have anymore little pearls of wisdom to throw my way?"

Faith stood for a minute staring at Buffy, slowly counting to ten before speaking.

"I have a couple of things I want to throw your way B, but it ain't pearls. As for how it feels, well, it feels pretty shitty. I'm not taking a victory lap by being here. I didn't win anything. In fact, I feel like I lost it all. I especially don't feel like fixing anyone's problems. And I didn't feel superior. Not until right now."

Buffy looked up.

"You judge me by how I felt about you, fine. You think I'm here so I'll look good? I don't give a fuck what anybody thinks about me, and that includes Willow and Kennedy in there. I just wanted to help you because you needed it. And you know you needed it. So in this situation right now, I am superior to you. You accuse me of having ulterior motives and I know I don't have any."

"I don't even understand that." Buffy said.

"I don't expect you to, B." Faith said. "Look, Giles and Dawn are coming. Deal with that. I am going to be here. Deal with that. And you can be in bitch mode or mother mode, and I couldn't care the fuck less. It's not gonna make any of this easier. So deal with that. Now, I'm going to go swimming. I'll see you after while."

"Still not afraid I'll leave?" Buffy said.

"If you want to leave, you know where the door is." Faith said, walking out.

Faith put on her bathing suit and grabbed a towel. Kennedy and Willow had taken Rose to the store and Buffy still had not come out of her room.

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Faith was struck by how much she really didn't care. It was fine by her, if she stayed in there all day. She thought back to what Buffy had said. Did she feel vindicated? She couldn't answer that. If she was honest with herself, she would have to say, yes. If only because she wasn't the screw-up this time. But Buffy is? And that's not what I wanted either.

'Still,' She thought. 'I could've slapped her back there. How does she manage to drive me from wanting to stay in bed with her all day, to wanting to put her face through Willow's wall? I never really knew how right I was about thin lines.'

The rest of the day was tense for the four. Buffy and Faith avoided each other. Buffy and Faith avoided Willow and Kennedy, as well. Buffy came in when the girls got back from the store, and she and Rose played for a while with Mr. Gordo at the kitchen table.

Rose soon wanted to find Faith, so Buffy took her outside and waited on Faith to get out of the pool. Faith came and got Rose, and the two still managed not to speak.

'It's for the best.' Faith told herself. 'save it for tonight.'

Buffy was arguing with herself as well.

'I'll just leave. As soon as it gets too tough I'll leave. But that's what they expect? So, fuck them. I'm gonna sit this out. Let them all gang up on me. All be in on it together. I'm not budging, and I'm not talking either. Nope not talking. They can talk all they want. But I'm not volunteering shit. I'll only answer their questions.' She'd then change her mind. 'No, I've got to calm down. They are trying to help me. I can't go into this being defensive. I have to listen to them. I hurt them.'

She laid down on her bed. She could hear Rose and Faith in the pool splashing.

"I can do this." She said out loud, before laying down.

Faith brought Rose inside.

"We should give her a bath." Kennedy said. "Mrs. Chambers is coming to get her."

"Who's Mrs. Chambers?" Faith asked.

"She's the neighbor." Faith looked suspicious. "No, don't, we trust her. She has been a huge help and she's agreed to watch Rose tonight."

"As long as you trust her." Faith said.

An hour later, Rose was gone and Faith, Kennedy and Willow were sitting in the living room.

"Buffy hasn't left her room all day." Willow said.

"I know." Faith said. "I lost my temper with her. I shouldn't have, but...she just knows what buttons to push, I guess."

"Well, they should be here in a minute. Should we get her? What are we going to say? I'm starting to think we should have thought this out a little more than we did. I just don't want to be counterproductive. Maybe this was a bad idea." Willow said.

"Why's that?"

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"I just, I don't know what to tell you, Faith. Honestly I want to help Buffy, you know that. There's too much between us for me not to want to help her. But..." Willow trailed off.

"Rose." Kennedy finished for her.

"Yeah, Rose. It's just...we've basically been her only real stability for a year. And Buffy comes back and is all reformed, and that's it. Mommy's better, so see ya? I'm not sure I can do that. I don't know if I can ever trust her. What's worse, I don't want to. I can't imagine what's going to happen because of this. I never thought she would come back here and actually want Rose. In all honesty, I thought she would come back, pull the same stunts as before, and that would be the end of it." Willow said looking away from Faith.

"Is that why you called me? You didn't think I could really help, did you? I'd drag her back, she'd laugh in our faces and take off again. Or did you think I'd join her, give her a running buddy, seeing as her scene was so my scene? Is that it?" Faith asked, angrily.

"No, no of course not. I knew you would never do that. I don't...I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said anything. I'm being selfish, I know that. It was stupid of me."

"No, Red I'm glad you did say something. Makes me feel better, really. I guess everyone does have ulterior motives. No wonder B doesn't trust us." Faith said, and then turned toward the door which had just rang. "It's too late now. They're here."

"Faith, wait." Kennedy said, as Faith was walking out of the room.

"No, Ken, answer the door." Faith turned around.

"I'm going to talk to Buffy."

Part 19

Buffy was still lying on her bed. There was no need to take a nap, she couldn't stop thinking about what was about to happen. She had resigned herself to a course of action while lying there. She had a plan and she knew what she was going to say.

'I have to be prepared for this.' She thought.

As she was leaving the room, Faith walked into her.

"Oh, sorry, B." She said, Buffy nodded. "Look, maybe this wasn't a good idea. I think, I...the others..." Faith couldn't decide what to say to Buffy.

"I know, I heard you guys." Buffy said.

"What? How much?"

"Enough. I already knew that, Faith." Buffy said. "I understand it as well. You've been around Rose for a few days and you love her, right?"

It was Faith's turn to nod.

"Right. Now imagine it's been a year. I'm a threat to that, Faith. I see that. I'm not sure how to feel about that, but I understand it."

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"Still, we didn't think this through. Not completely. There is likely to be a lot of hostility in that room. I don't want you to run away."

"They don't either, Faith. It may seem like they do, but they don't." Buffy sighed walking past her. "Come on."

Buffy walked into the living room, to find Giles and Dawn sitting with the two girls. Faith was behind her.

"Hello, Buffy." Giles said first. "It's truly good to see you."

Buffy ran to him and hugged him, he flinched before responding.

"I'm sorry, Buffy." He said, when he saw her hurt expression. "I wasn't expecting that."

"It's okay." She said, backing away.

"Hi, Dawnie." She said, glancing at her sister.

"You look different than I expected Buffy." Dawn said sitting down.

"Hello, Faith. It's good to see you as well." Giles said, sitting down. "How are you?"

"Fishing for five by five, G-man?" She asked. He smiled and nodded. "Okay, I'm five by five."

"I've been talking to the girls and I don't know if this is such a good idea, Buffy. I admit that we were all hasty in deciding this. I suppose I just wanted to see you." Giles said looking back at Buffy.

"It's okay, Giles." Buffy said. "I want to."

"No, Buffy, I agree," Faith said. "with Giles. I think we should rethink this. We aren't here to attack you, and I'm afraid that's what will happen." She finished, looking at the others.

Buffy held up her hands. "I'm cool with that. Well, not attacking, I mean not physical attacking. I don't think that would be fun. Not that I expect this to be fun." She sighed.

"Ok, look, everybody sit down."

Willow spoke. "We are all sitting down." She said, looking around.

"Umm, okay. Well, then I want to talk."

Faith started to speak.

"No, let me finish. I've been in my room for a few hours now, and this is all I've been thinking about. So, I want to talk. That's what you wanted, right?" Buffy asked.

They nodded.

"Good. So this is what I was thinking. I wanna talk, tell you guys some things. I'm working on very little nerve here, so I know I have no right to ask this, but I want to know if you would just listen. Until I get through. Is that okay?" Faith and Giles nodded.

"Wills?" Willow looked at Kennedy and they both nodded as well. Buffy looked at Dawn.

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"I guess." Dawn spoke.

"Before I begin, though," Buffy said, looking around. "where's Xander?"

"He's not coming." Willow said.

"Oh. He knows about it?" Buffy asked. Willow again nodded. "Well...okay. I respect that. I completely understand it as well."

Buffy sat down, opposite the rest of the group in a chair she pulled across the room.

"First of all, I want to say I'm sorry."

Everyone looked down.

"I know you don't want to hear it. And I can recall telling one certain someone that I would beat them to death if they uttered those words to me." She looked at Faith.

"But I am. I know that it doesn't fix anything. It probably doesn't even matter to you. But I need to say it. You need to know it. I'm not gonna sit here and give you guys a long drawn out excuse of why I did the things that I did. I don't have one. I wasn't intentionally trying to hurt you. To be completely honest, I wasn't thinking about you at all. None of you." She took a breath and paused.

"What I was doing was escaping. I thought I could handle it and when I knew I couldn't, I didn't care. It escalated and I was spiraling. I wish that I could say it was different. That I did care what I was doing, but I didn't."

At this point everyone was staring at her, still not speaking.

Willow wasn't looking at her, but the rest of them watched her as she got up and crisscrossed the room.

She began again.

"I wasn't trying to escape any of you. If that is what you thought. I know I ran away several times. I know I sent some of you away." She said, looking at Dawn.

"But I wasn't escaping you. I wanted to not come back, but I couldn't. Why did you think that I kept returning? No matter how many people I met, and how connected they became to my life, they never could replace one moment with any of you. So I would come back. But I didn't know what I wanted. I felt smothered. I made myself feel that way here, around you guys, you didn't do it to me. But it was there just the same, and so I left. The last time I stayed away so long because I was embarrassed. There were so many times that I wanted to come back, to call you, to do something to fix what I was doing. But I had a child, one I didn't even care about, and I knew what you would think. And when I did come back, it wasn't because I got over that embarrassment, that feeling of failure, it was because I needed you to fix my mess. The thought of doing it on my own, terrified me. Rose terrified me. And I knew you," She said looking at Willow. "I knew you would do what was right. Because I couldn't."

Willow started to speak, noticing that Buffy's last few statements were coming out choked.

"Please let me finish, Wills." She said, trying to gain her composure. "I have to. I want to address everyone separately. To show you that I've thought about all of you and what I did wrong. Please let me do that."

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"Okay." Willow said.

Faith was getting antsy watching Buffy pace. She wanted to tell her that it was enough for now. She didn't want to see anymore, but it wasn't about her, so she continued to stay silent. She was barely moving, terrified of what Buffy was going to say, especially to her.

"Giles," Buffy said. "I guess I'll start with you. We've grown apart, huh?" She asked him. He smiled sadly. "It's not your fault. I know that now. I held you on a pedestal. I expected you to know what was right, and then I sent you packing back to England when I started to feel suffocated. I know you knew what I was doing," He nodded again. "but it didn't stop me. Maybe the reason I sent the two of you there," She said glancing at Dawn. "is because I knew you could stop me. I thought I could manipulate Willow and Xander, that they would understand, but I knew you wouldn't. Again, I'm sorry."

Giles started to speak.

"No please, please let me finish with everyone. Then I promise if it takes all night, I will listen to each of you and answer anything you have to say. But if I stop. I'm afraid to stop. Don't make me." She pleaded.

"Go ahead." He said.

Buffy moved back to her seat and looked at Dawn.

"I'm not sure what to say to you. I know I can't fix it. I was responsible for you and I let you down. Not just with this, but time and time again. I got rid of you, because I was scared of you. I'm sorry. I do love you, I've never stopped loving you. I wish, I hope that you know that. What I did to you with Jack. It's the first thing in a long line of mistakes I wish I could undo. I hurt you for no other reason than for the hell of it. I didn't respect you enough to even care. I don't deserve anything from you," She was now completely crying. "but I am sorry. I am so sorry that I would do whatever you asked me to do to fix it. Anything."

Dawn had not tried to speak like Giles. She made no move to say anything when she realized Buffy was through, so Buffy moved on.

Part 20

"Kennedy, I guess you're next. I had the hardest time deciding what I wanted to say to you. I know that we didn't know each other for very long before all of this started and that our relationship was strained at best. That all being said, I respected, do respect you. If for nothing more than loving Willow, for helping her when she needed you. I guess I was jealous. I never expected you to do what you did." Buffy was wringing her hands trying to look Kennedy in the face. "Take care of Rose. I know you didn't want to clean my messes, and you had no reason to, but you did. I'm not stupid, I know that you love Rose, and that you love Willow, and it wasn't for me that you did it. But you still did. You're a better person than I ever gave you credit for. I wish I could have known you before, that you could have seen the other me. But I never let you. Yet you still chose to do this, you continue to help me. And I just wanted to thank you. For that. For all of it." Buffy finished.

Buffy got up and went to sit beside Willow, she took Willow's hand.

"Guess I'm next, huh?" Willow asked softly.

"I will never have enough time to say all the things that I want to say to you. I think we are at a point now that it won't matter. You were my best friend. I love you and Xander like I could no one else. I never gave you any credit, either of you. Not when you deserved it. I deserted you, left you with my child, and you picked up my pieces and assembled them. I kept the two of you in the dark. I let you

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play roles in the shadows, I took all the glory, and I was selfish. I used you, continuously, and you never even seemed bothered by it. I lied to you, I was awful to you, and still you let me into your house, and you give me a chance." Buffy was looking Willow in the eye. "I know how you feel about Rose." Willow looked to Faith, surprised. "No, she didn't tell me, I overheard it. I already knew it. You should know that I would never deprive Rose of you, of any of you. She's lucky to have you."

Buffy took a deep breath and continued.

"But I am her mother. I have no right to ask you for another chance, Willow, I know that. But I need it, and she needs it. You have to see that. Please. If you think, if you truly think, that Rose doesn't need me, that she would be better without me, than I will leave. I promise, I will give up everything and I will leave here and you will never see me again. If that is what you think is best, that is what I'll do. I just hope that it isn't."

She got up from her place beside Willow.

Faith, on the other side of the room, was near panic.

'Don't let her do this, please.' She was thinking. 'I can't.'

Buffy noticed her nervousness.

"Faith, please," She said. "look at me."

"No, Buffy, don't. You haven't hurt me. Not like you have hurt them. You don't owe me an explanation of your actions. I understand them. Don't apologize to me." Faith was barely whispering by the time she finished.

Buffy knelt in front of her.

"I'm not going to apologize, Faith. But please let me talk. I have so much to say to you. And they need to hear it, too. For six years I have searched for you."

Faith looked surprised.

"Not literally, I knew Willow could reach you. I didn't want to do that. That was too much facing for me. But all the others, they were you. Even the perfume you wore, anything about you that I could find in someone, I jumped on them. I even made it up. Their voice, their eat-shit attitude, their carefreeness, it didn't matter, as long as I could see you in something, someone, I could survive. When you walked into that bar that night, my heart was beating so fast I was certain you could hear it across the room. I, what I did that night, I wanted you," The others looked around uncomfortably. "but I wanted to run you away more. I had to, otherwise I knew you would have me here and I would finally have to deal. I was afraid of that. Seeing you with Rose, I couldn't decide whether I was jealous or happy. You loved my daughter after one day. I mean, you came here and you are actually together. You are the calm one. You are the sane one. You are the wise one. And I am the fuck-up I always made you think you are."

Buffy had her hands on Faith's knees.

Faith, for her part, finally allowed herself to cry, albeit silently while Buffy continued.

"It's why I'm glad you left the note. It's why I'm glad you got off that bus and went to Boston. If you hadn't... If I had dragged you here with me, I'm afraid of what I would have made you do. Don't get me wrong, I know you're strong, Faith. I know that now more than ever, and even then I knew you were going to be okay. But I also know that it would have been so much easier to pull you down than

Chasing The Girl – Leia

for you to pull me up. That's the way it is with anything. And as many lives as I've ruined, I'm glad I wasn't given the chance to ruin yours." Buffy was now barely whispering, and tears were sliding down her cheeks.

Faith was looking at her hands, softly sobbing, afraid of what she would say next.

"I don't deserve you, Faith. I'm not even sure that you see me that way anymore. You shouldn't. You've seen what I am, and what I can become. I don't want to destroy you and I'm afraid I will. I wish that I could go with you, just forget all of this, but I can't. I can't be with you. If I had dealt with those feelings long before that bus ride, like I should have, I could have avoided all of this. We could have been happy. But I fucked it all up. I need to pay penance, and part of that punishment is not having you. I can't think of anything more precious that I could give up. What's more, you don't deserve to be hurt, you really don't. I want you to be with someone who is your equal, because I am so clearly not."

Faith was crying hard, shoulders shaking, she got up and left the room. Kennedy moved to follow her.

"Let her go, Kennedy," Giles spoke, breaking the silence, "if she had had something to say she would still be in here. As for the rest of us. I think we should all take a break. That was incredibly brave of you, Buffy, but you must understand that we cannot answer you at this point. It would be better for everyone in here, if we just relaxed for a few moments."

Buffy was still staring at the door that Faith had exited through, Willow came up behind her.

"Buffy, it's okay to cry." Hugging her from behind. Buffy turned in her arms and broke down miserably.

"I just want to do what's right, Will, I really do. You have to believe me."

"I do, Buffy. I'm not sure what else to say right now and I don't think have to deal with it all at once." She hugged Buffy tighter, laying the girl's head on her shoulder.

Dawn came from behind Buffy and put her hand on her back.

"I never stopped loving you, either." She said sadly before leaving the room.

Willow looked over Buffy's head at Kennedy, who was standing there awkwardly staring at the two.

"Why don't you show Giles and Dawn where to sleep and then go get Rose?" She asked her, obviously just giving the uncomfortable girl something to do.

She walked Buffy back to the couch and let her cry on her lap, wondering how things had changed so dramatically with only a few words. She rubbed Buffy's head softly as she sobbed.

'I guess this girl has a hold on all of us.' She thought.

Part 21

Faith fell on her bed trying to control her crying.

'Stop it. Stop it.' She told herself in her head.

She laid in the bed silently willing everyone to go to sleep. After she had stopped crying and figured she was unable to sleep, she crept out into the hall noticing all the lights were off.

Chasing The Girl – Leia

'Good.' She thought, taking a deep breath, she went back into her room and began to pack.

Buffy was sitting on her bed listening to Faith in the next room.

She knew she should go in there, stop her from packing, she knew that was what she was doing. She had spent more than a few minutes crying on Willow's lap, until Kennedy had come back into the room.

"Giles and Dawn are going to bed. I gave him the pullout, I didn't think about not having enough room, that's never happened before." She smiled slightly at the two weary girls. "Dawn's in our bed, I figured I could sleep with Rose." Willow nodded to her.

"Faith, umm she hasn't come out of her room, so I guess we should just leave her alone?"

"Yeah, good idea." Willow looked down at Buffy's head, still lying in her lap, "I think I'll sleep with Buffy tonight, if that's okay?" Buffy nodded in her lap. "Just like old times huh?"

"Yes, thank you, Willow, I realize we're not through." Buffy said sitting up.

Willow looked at Kennedy who left the room.

"What you did, Buffy, it was incredibly brave. It came from the Buffy I know, not the one you had become, and everything I wanted to say, all of it, it was meant for that Buffy, not you. I don't know what to say now. I think sleep will help us."

"I do love Faith." Buffy said, after Willow rose from the couch. "I do." She whispered again softly.

"If I didn't learn anything else tonight, Buffy, I learned that."

Willow had gone to get ready for bed and Buffy was still sitting in the same place listening for Faith when she returned.

"She's leaving." Buffy said, getting up when Willow came in the room.

"I heard her. She did stop crying. But I think you're right. You need to decide what you want to do about that. I hate that it has to be right now, but I think it does. Faith is about to pull her famous escape routine and you have a chance to stop it."

"Do I want to?" Buffy asked.

Willow raised an eyebrow. "Do you?"

"Of course, but you see my point don't you, Will?"

"I see what you're thinking, yes. But I don't know if you should punish yourself. It may not be good to jump into anything with Faith, at least not right now, but I bet she knows that. But, by punishing yourself, you are also punishing her. My advice is to ask her. She deserves to be able to tell you how she feels. She's been your only advocate, even when she didn't want to be."

Buffy sighed and crossed the room, sitting on the floor.

"Unfortunately, you don't have a lot of time to decide what to say. Cause I think she's about to bail."

"I know." They heard the door to Faith's room and Buffy began to look panicked.

Chasing The Girl – Leia

"She'll check on Rose first." Willow said. "So you probably have a few minutes."

Faith walked into Rose's room to find Kennedy lying in bed with Rose.

"Hey." She said softly, turning towards the door as Faith entered.

"I didn't mean to wake you."

"Kinda waiting for you." She said looking at Faith and getting up. She put her hand on her shoulder. "I know we don't know each other that well. But I like you, and I care about you. I don't want to see you do something you'll regret."

"She doesn't want me here."

"She didn't say that. She's drained, and she may have been right about some things," Faith looked away from her. "but not all of it. She just doesn't want to hurt you. She's trying in her own way to protect you. I'm afraid if you leave, at least without telling her, you'll undo all the progress she's made tonight. Besides," Kennedy looked down and pointed at Rose. "you can't leave her without telling her. It would upset her. Where's Faithy? Where's Faithy? That's all we'd hear. You wouldn't want to do that to Rosie, would you?" She finished, smiling.

"Low blow, Ken." Faith smiled. "But you're right. I'll go talk to B."

She gave Rose a kiss on the cheek. "Such a low blow."

"I'm pretty good at that. Nighty-night Faith."

"Bite me, Ken." She said, shutting the door.

Buffy heard Rose's door shut and walked into the hall. Faith was standing there when she came out.

"Faith, listen, please don't leave, not like this. I didn't mean to hurt you. I'm trying not to, I'm sorry for that. Just you can't go, not like this, please." Buffy was holding both of Faith's arms.

Faith, staring at the floor, finally spoke.

"I was coming to talk to you. I'm not going to leave. Not like that. I was just...I was hurt. I heard the rejection, and you know, I told you years ago, that rejection and I are not mates. I was going to run, but I can't leave, not like that."

"But you're going to leave?"

"I have to at some point, B. You made your decision and I wasn't even given a choice in the matter. You didn't even ask me what I wanted. You assumed you knew," She saw Buffy catch her breath. "and you did." She said leaning her back against the wall.

"You have always known. But I didn't expect anything from you, Buffy, I never have. I just wanted to help you. I wasn't here to get into your pants. If that is what you were thinking." Faith rose from the wall and walked past Buffy. She turned around.

"There's so much I need to tell you. I should have been more honest. But I can't right now, I just can't. We should just go to bed."

Buffy nodded slowly and went back to her room. Faith made her way to her room and shut the door, then opened it again, then shut it.

Chasing The Girl – Leia

'Ok, I need a smoke.' She thought, and made her way to the back door. Willow was in the kitchen. "Whatcha doin?" Faith asked.

"I can't sleep. But I don't want to keep Buffy awake. I also don't want to leave her alone. But I can't stay in there. It's...I don't know why. I really don't. She's already asleep, so I guess it doesn't matter. I'm so tired, but I can't sleep." Willow was close to tears.

"Look, we're all emotional here. And tired. And frankly, freaked. We can play musical bedrooms." Willow looked up at Faith. "Take my room, I'm not tired. Don't look at me like that. I'm not going to jump your bones, Red, Kennedy's a Slayer now, it'd be too fair a fight."

"Glad you want me, Faith, but we can't leave Buffy alone." Willow said.

"I know, I'm not sleepy. I'll sit with her."

"Are you sure?"

"Yeah, if you'll let me smoke in there?" Faith looked at her, smiling.

"Deal." Willow smiled back.

Faith walked into Buffy's room and sat across from the bed in the overstuffed armchair.

'You're cute asleep, Angel was right about that.' She thought, before lighting a cigarette. She pulled her knees under her chin.

'And just another freakin reason why I can't leave you.' She thought.

Part 22

Buffy awoke. Her head was hurting and she looked around for Willow.

'Where is she?' She thought. She squinted and looked at the clock. Four o'clock.

She started to cry.

Faith stirred in her sleep. "B, are you okay?" Faith could hear her crying. "What's wrong?"

"Faith, where are you?"

"Right here. Right here." Faith crossed the room quickly. "What's up?" She patted Buffy's head.

"I just thought, no one was...I didn't think anyone was here." Buffy sniffed.

"Well, I'm here, go back to sleep, 'k?"

"Where are you going? Where's Will?" Buffy grabbed Faith's arm as she turned around.

"She's in my room."

"Why?"

"Cause I'm in here?"

Chasing The Girl – Leia

"Again, why?"

"Cause Red's too hot, couldn't stay in the room with her and all." Faith smiled at Buffy. "I just wanted to stay in here with ya. Can't I do that?"

"Yes, I'm sorry, excuse the paranoia, it's not uncommon for me to wake up and the entire place be deserted."

"Willow and Kennedy run away in the middle of the night?"

"No, I mean, you know, wake up not knowing where you are, nobody there."

"Unfortunately, I do know, B. That's a shitty feeling. Scary, too." Faith sat on the bed.

She looked at Buffy's hand holding her arm. "It's why I'm in here and all." She said, before removing it.

"You don't have to sleep in the chair, I know you're tired. I won't jump you or anything."

"Hey, that's the same thing I told Red, she didn't believe me though. I guess once a slutty psychopath, always a slutty psychopath." Buffy would have reprimanded Faith had she not seen her smiling.

"I know B, I'm not a slutty psychopath anymore."

"Well, I was gonna say, yes I understand, but ok you're not a psychopath anymore." Buffy smirked.

"Slutty psychopath, B."

"Let's not get carried away, F...you should keep some interesting characteristics." Buffy laid back down and looked at Faith. "Besides, I find sluts endearing, course I'm fucked up, so..." She closed her eyes. "sleep here, Faith."

"I don't think so."

"Why?"

"Do we really want to have this conversation at..." She looked at the bedside clock. "four a.m.?"

"If we need to have it, then yes. Four a.m.'s cool with me."

"Look, Buffy," Faith said getting up and moving back to the chair. "I want to help you. From some deep masochistic side, I need to help you. But it doesn't mean I don't have feelings, I mean those feelings don't change. They're still there, the feelings." Faith sighed heavily. "When the fuck did I start channeling Willow? Ok, look, you know that I pretty much love you. Hell, there were times I think I worshipped you. I lived for you. In prison, you were the single fucking thing I thought about, well, besides sex, more than once a day. So you see the obsession?" She waited for a moment, but Buffy didn't speak.

"Anyway, I...you see? I can't. I can't be here with you and pretend like it's not there. I don't want to play the 'sexual innuendo Faith' anymore. I'm not baiting you, but then again I never was. It's becoming too much for me. It's too much now. It became that way when I had to will myself not to climb into bed with you, not to fuck you that night at the club. It's a constant fight with everything about me. My desire for you is fighting with my conscious, and after a while I'm afraid that the wrong one will win."

Chasing The Girl – Leia

"Which one's the wrong one?" Buffy asked quietly.

"Does it matter? You made a decision. I understand waiting, B. I really do. It isn't good for you to jump into some sort of relationship, you need to focus on other things. I really understand that. But it doesn't make me feel any different. And you decide to that it can never work. What the fuck is that about? You want to change, yet you're still thinking about yourself."

"Thinking about myself? Faith I'm doing this for you. I don't want to hurt you. I don't deserve..."

Buffy was cut off by Faith.

"...me. I know, I know, you don't deserve me. You fucking said that. That's my point, who the fuck are you to decide what I need. I get no say in it? If you don't want me, if you don't...love me, than say that. Please. But don't play the whole Joan of Arc girl, cause you're not."

"I don't want you to go Faith, I really don't."

"If you can't change, Buffy, I don't think I can stay. I want to help you, I think I did.."

"You did."

"But now you don't need me. You've got Willow and the rest of them. I believe they are going to help you. And if not, well, I'll come back and kick ass. Let them give me a reason, but...you don't need me anymore."

"I do need you. But you're leaving, aren't you?"

"I don't see a way around it. I want to stay, but...I love myself, Buffy. That's really hard for me to say, but for a long time, I didn't love myself. I couldn't love you like I wanted to, because I didn't care about me. Maybe that's what you're going through. It doesn't matter, because, I do love myself now. And I can't put myself in this situation. Being near you every day, seeing you, and not...not having you. I'm afraid I couldn't control myself."

Faith finished and moved to the bed, Buffy was crying.

"And what, Faith," She suddenly snapped. "could you control yourself around others. When you get back? Are you gonna remain celibate forever?"

"I've never been celibate, B." She said. "Jeez, I'm not a saint."

"Oh."

"Look, it's not about that. You think I'm gonna go back to Boston and find someone else? Fall in love and forget all about you? Yeah right, fat fucking chance. I go six years without seeing you and...I had opportunities, but they were like...shit they couldn't compare. Why am I telling you this, when you already know that?"

"I'm sorry. If you have to go, than you should go."

"No, I won't if you can't deal without me here. I'm not going til I know it's okay."

"I don't want you to leave, if that's what you want to hear. I'm never going to say that. I want to be honest, and that isn't honest. I want you to stay. But I understand, I can't keep you here, not like that, it's unfair."

Chasing The Girl – Leia

"It's not like I'll stay gone. I'll be back. I've decided at least once a month. And you can come visit, I want you to. I don't want to go without seeing you or Rose. I just think a little time apart, well, it couldn't hurt." Faith looked at her hands. "If I give you that, I mean the time, would you ever, could you change your mind, maybe?" She choked out.

Buffy lifted Faith's chin and looked into her eyes.

"I hope so, baby." She kissed her on the forehead. Faith collapsed, crying again, and Buffy stroked her hair, content on being the one who was consoling.

Part 23

Six months later.

Faith was busy wiping down the bar for the fifth time that night.

'Fucking morons,' She thought. 'can't keep from spilling a single beer, or hitting an ash tray, or just being nasty. What the hell am I doing here?'

She was sick of these idiots, sick of Boston. She missed B. It had been six months and she had seen her at least every three weeks. Buffy would come visit and bring Rose, or she would fly or drive to New Orleans. She talked to her on the phone, she went to the zoo, the aquarium, the park with the mothers and daughters.

She was accepting Buffy's progress. So why did it feel like every time she saw her a knife was once again sliding into her stomach?

'Cause she's fucking killing me,' She thought. 'and she doesn't even fucking know it.'

Faith had left New Orleans the day after Buffy's epiphany with the gang; red-eyed and crying. It took her three days to get back to Boston. She was unable to drive very far without stopping, too tired to do anything but lie down.

Boston sucked, but New Orleans had gotten better. At least for Buffy. It was slow going, Willow opened up to Buffy more everyday. Once Buffy proved to her that she was herself, there was nothing Willow could do but accept her back into her life.

Of course, she and Xander had argued.

"She's changed." Willow told him.

"Somehow I find it hard to believe that after one night and day with Faith, the old Buffy emerged good as new and ready for wear." Xander returned.

"Well, she did. It wasn't Faith, Xander. I mean, Faith helped, but Buffy changed, on her own. She wanted to. She wants to be Rose's mother. She wants to do what's right."

"Oh, good. Well, she wants to be Rose's mother," Xander looked at Willow like she had lost her mind. "well I guess that everything is okey dokey now. I feel so much better. She and Faith can have fun and raise Rose. A little Slayer family. Let's just give the baby to the psychopaths."

"Oh, shut up, Xander. Faith isn't even fucking here. She went back to Boston yesterday."

Xander looked at Willow surprised. "Why?"

Chasing The Girl – Leia

"Cause Buffy and she are, well, they are trying to give each other space. Buffy needs to focus on getting better. And Faith would be a distraction, to her focus, I mean. She's got to think about Rose. They both are. She comes first, and furthermore, do you think that Kennedy and I are idiots? Like we would just allow Buffy to take Rose and go? She's making progress, but she needs help." Willow placed her hand on Xander's shoulder.

"Lister, Xander, if you can't forgive her, that's fine. She doesn't even expect you to. But I do. Do it for me?" She looked up at Xander. "Or do it for Rose. Or do it for yourself. But just do it. Trust me, it's a different feeling, not being angry at her anymore. It feels normal again, for the first time in six years, it feels normal."

Xander looked down. "And what if she fucks up again?"

"What if she does? It's not like we haven't seen it. But I don't think she will. She's really changed, I can see the old Buffy in her. Trust me, Xander, I know you want to believe me."

"Your powers of persuasion still astound." He smiled, before looking down again. "Alright." He said, finally meeting Willow's eyes.

"Take me to her."

And so Buffy apologized. She had rehearsed what she was going to say to him, just like the others. She told him she had used him. That she didn't respect him, and that she knew that all he had ever wanted to do was help her. He had listened and was nonreciprocal until she finished.

"Well, Buff," He said. "I believe you. I don't know why. But then again, I never could explain my pull to you. Sure I thought you were hot, I mean are hot, not that I want you. Though you're hot, I mean. Stupid Xander should shut up and let Smart Xander speak." Buffy smiled. "I just...it was more. You're my friend. I trust you, I don't know why, but I do. And I believe you. If you say you're gonna do what's right, I believe you."

"That's all I wanted. A chance. I know I don't deserve it, but..." Buffy smiled at him, "...you were always a sucker for the hot Slayer."

"Apparently, Buffy." He said, hugging her. "We're all suckers. But in a good way. But not in the good way. Cause that's different. Being a sucker in the good way. Though I can be...what the hell am I talking about?"

"I don't know, Xander, but I just realized how much I've missed you."

So the gang had stood behind Buffy. Giles and Dawn had stayed in New Orleans for a few days and things seemed to be progressing.

Faith was busy with her back to the bar when she heard her name.

"Hey, Faith." She looked up into the eyes of a green-eyed blond.

"Hey, Kara," She smiled. "what ya need?"

"You."

"Not on the menu, but I can get you a drink."

Chasing The Girl – Leia

"Okay, give me a beer." Kara said, fishing a cigarette out of her mouth. She leaned over the bar and Faith pulled out the lighter, striking it and holding the flame to the girl. Kara moved Faith's hand out of the way and grabbed her arm, pulling her across the bar.

Before Faith had time to register the girl's advances, she felt her mouth on hers.

Time stopped only for a moment as she allowed herself the sensation of the girl to overwhelm her rational judgment. Fortunately, her rationality soon returned, and she pulled away. Faith looked at the girl and was about to make a comment, when something out of the corner of her eye caught her attention.

She turned, slowly, silently pleading to any fucking body that would listen, not to be what she thought it was.

"B." She said, rather loudly when she saw her. 'Calm down, dumbass.' She thought.

Buffy was standing at the other end of her bar, staring at the girl that had just kissed Faith.

"B." Faith tried again, but Buffy was still staring. Faith moved over to the other end of the bar, trying to get to Buffy. "Hey, B. Look at me." Faith said.

Buffy turned to Faith. "I was going to surprise you. Surprise, I guess." She said looking down at the bar.

"God, Buffy, it's not..." Faith looked at Buffy pleadingly, grabbing the girl's hands. Buffy pulled them away.

"...what I think it is." She answered cutting Faith off, and taking back her hands. "I understand, Faith really I do." Buffy said. Faith was trying to speak, but Buffy wouldn't let her. "I think it would be for the best if I leave. I'm sorry, I should have at least called."

"No, please don't leave. Let me explain." Faith was near hysterics, trying unsuccessfully to grab Buffy's hands. She heard the other bartender calling her name.

"Shit." She said, looking over before looking back at Buffy. "B, please, let me..." Again she heard the bartender call her name.

"Hold the fuck on!" She said, screaming at him. "B. I..."

"It's okay, Faith, I need to go." Buffy said again, cutting Faith off. She was trying to choke down the knot forming quickly in her throat. "You need to see what he wants." She told Faith, who was totally ignoring her pissed off co-worker. "I'm just gonna..." Buffy felt the tears start sliding and turned, running away.

Faith put her hands on the counter and jumped over. She pushed several people out of the way trying vainly to get to Buffy, who was just as quickly trying to get away from her.

"B, wait!" She yelled, as she ran outside, watching Buffy walk away. She sped her pace and caught Buffy by the arm, spinning her around.

"Buffy, goddammit, wait." Buffy turned around, she couldn't see Faith clearly.

"Oh, god, don't cry baby, I'm sorry, please, don't cry." Faith wrapped one arm around Buffy's waist and pulled her closer.

Chasing The Girl – Leia

"I'm sorry, please, please, I'm sorry." She said, as she wiped softly at Buffy's cheek. "I wasn't...she just did that B, you know I would never, I ...shit...you're the only one. I'm waiting B, I told ya that. I'm waiting. I'm waiting. I'm waiting." She kept repeating softly, as Buffy laid her head on her chest. "I'm always waiting."

"No, you shouldn't wait. I'm an idiot. I think I can fly here and just decide that now it's time, now it's okay. And you'll accept that. I'm stupid. Like you are just here..." Buffy couldn't finish.

"It's time? Time for what?"

"Nothing."

Faith put her hands on her shoulders and pulled Buffy away from her, looking her in the eyes.

"Time for what?"

"Nothing. I was wrong." Buffy said, shrugging Faith's hands off of her and turning.

"I don't fucking think so." Faith grabbed her again.

Buffy stayed where she was, Faith at her back. Faith moved in closer and put an arm on her hip. She leaned down and whispered in her ear

"Do you want me?"

Buffy internally moaned at the breath on her neck.

"I've always...Faith, Jesus." She stayed very still, feeling Faith's breath catch, still on her neck. "You know. I was just, I was ready, I guess."

Faith wrapped her other arm around Buffy, pulling her flush against her body. Back to chest, Buffy stared straight ahead and Faith kept her lips near her ear.

"Tell me B." She said, stilling breathing deeply. When Buffy didn't reply, she repeated herself.

"Tell me."

Buffy turned her head to the side, outwardly moaning when Faith snaked her tongue out as she moved.

"I want you."

"What?" Faith asked, licking her again, lower now, near her shoulder.

"I want you. I want you. Oh, god..." Buffy trailed off.

Faith was rotating her hips very slowly against Buffy's ass. She moved the small strap down Buffy's shoulders and licked again. Buffy moaned louder.

"I want you."

Faith roughly pulled Buffy's hips into hers and wrapped her arms around the smaller girl's stomach.

"Come on." She said, slowly letting her go and grabbing her hand.

Part 24

'Ok, well, maybe I should have thought about this a little more.' Faith thought, as she watched Buffy sit down on her couch. 'She tells me she wants me and I give any freak with eyes a nice show of my tongue licking wet spots down her shoulder. Mmm, wet, licking.' She thought. 'Fucking-A, shut up!' She told herself, walking into the kitchen.

"You want anything?"

"No, thanks." Buffy barely answered, turning her hands over and over in her lap.

'What am I doing?' Was the single diatribe that was running through Buffy's mind as Faith busied herself in the kitchen. 'Is she avoiding me?' Her mind then switched to, as she listened to the various clanging coming from the brunette's kitchen.

"Where's Rosie?"

'Oh, that's smart.' Faith thought, as soon as she'd spoken. 'Ask her about the kid. She tells me she wants me and I ask about the kid.'

"She's in the car." Buffy looked up at Faith, whose mouth was hanging open. "Shut up. She's with Willow. Did you think I'd bring her, with what I was planning to do and all?"

Faith sat down on the sofa next to Buffy, their thighs barely touching, and leaned back against the couch.

"What exactly were you planning, B? I mean I get the surprise visit, but why?"

"We really have to go through this again?"

"What? I got you want me. Not many people can resist me when my tongue is in-charge." Faith watched Buffy's face as her mind played with the words. "I mean after that. What did you really want?"

"You know, Faith, it's been six months."

"Yeah, Buffy, I can count."

"And apparently continue to be a smartass, as well." Faith looked at her, but Buffy continued. "No, I like the smartass Faith. And I like the sweet Faith. I like all the Faiths. Except the one here in Boston."

"What's wrong with the one in Boston?"

"Well, basically, just that she's here in Boston. And I'm not."

Faith leaned up and whispered into Buffy's ear. "You're here now." She put her arm around Buffy's waist and pulled her into her lap.

"Tell me to stop." She whispered.

Buffy pressed her back into Faith and moved her legs to straddle the girl's thighs.

"No." She whimpered.

Chasing The Girl – Leia

Faith ran her hands along Buffy's waist and over the front of her thighs, resting them lightly on the inside of each. Buffy turned her head to the side and found Faith's mouth.

The first touch of her lips and she moaned, while Faith gripped her thighs harder.

She wrapped one hand around Faith's head and rested the other one on top of Faith's hand. She pulled her to her mouth, tighter, and was rewarded with a groan of her own.

Faith quickly moved her hands back to Buffy's waist and stood her up; Buffy, a little stunned, turned to look at Faith who was trying to catch her breath.

"Not sofa, B. Bed." Buffy laughed lightly at Faith's abrupt command and started walking to the bedroom.

She got into the hall and turned to see Faith still sitting staring at her.

"Not, sofa, Faith. Bed." She said smiling at Faith.

Faith still didn't speak and Buffy's smile rapidly faded as she noticed the near voracious glare Faith was giving her. When Faith rose and started to follow, it was Buffy's turn to stay still, she couldn't move with Faith's eyes still on her.

Faith stood in front of her and wrapped her arms around her back, resting them possessively on Buffy's ass. She pushed her mouth onto the smaller girl's neck and began to back them into the bedroom. Buffy, for her part, had crept her hands into Faith's hair and was trying to basically hang on as Faith almost violently carried them both to the bed.

Faith had been, up until this point, working on a sort of automatic reflex. Unable to form more than a few thoughts, she was quickly giving into her body's commands. When Buffy's knees hit the bed, both girls tumbled onto it, Faith straddling Buffy's stomach.

Buffy reached up and pulled the other girl's shirt unceremoniously over her head. Faith felt her body contract at the clearly audible gasp from the other girl.

"I never wear a bra, B." She said, stretching her arms over head before bending down over the girl, their faces inches apart. "It always just seems to get in the way."

She lowered her lips to the girl's and kissed before being dumped quite unexpectedly on her ass on the floor.

"I guess that would be useful in what scenario?" Buffy was panting, peering down at the girl.

Faith was staring up at Buffy, with a look lacking in remorse.

"What the fuck are you talking about?" She stood up, still shirtless and walked over to the girl. When Buffy didn't answer she continued to stare.

"My not wearing a bra?" Faith asked. Buffy nodded.

"Oh, fucking-A, Buffy, you know what I meant."

Buffy stood up and walked over to Faith. "Do I?"

Chasing The Girl – Leia

"Do you think I'm fucking everything that walks near, B? How many times do we have to keep doing this?" She ran her hands through her hair. "This is not what I want. I don't want it to be because you think someone else might beat you to the punch, or whatever, don't you get that?"

Buffy had stopped trying to focus on anything but the growing wetness between her legs at the sight of an exasperated Faith stretching.

"I'm sorry, I know. I just, I don't know how to do this."

"What?"

"Make love." Buffy said, laying back onto the bed. "But I'm willing to try."

"Me, too." Faith removed her pants still staring at Buffy, who moved to remove her own clothes.

"Let me." Faith said, crawling back onto the bed. She slowly divested her of her shirt, trailing wet kisses down her abdomen. Before going any further she looked up at Buffy, "I've been waiting since the day I met you to do this." She said, removing the rest of the girl's clothing.

Buffy was all ready with a witty comeback, but found herself silenced as Faith laid her naked flush against her. She could feel the heat growing between Faith's legs and her own wetness was getting the better of her.

Faith was busy raining kisses on Buffy's neck and face, becoming more and more turned on by the soft gasping sighs the girl beneath her was making. Buffy ran her hands down Faith's stomach, and before she had time to register the girl's journey, Buffy had slipped her fingers in between her folds.

"Jesus." Faith breathed into Buffy's mouth, as the girl continued to run her hand back and forth against her pussy.

Faith was slowly building up a rhythm of rocking against Buffy's hand, trying to get her to focus the friction on her clit.

"C'mon, B." Faith urged, rocking more forcefully now.

Buffy took her unoccupied hand and slid it down as well, gathering up Faith's juices before returning them to her own mouth. She did it so fast, Faith didn't realize what the girl was doing, still intent on getting off, that when she noticed Buffy sucking her fingers and registered it was her wetness she was sucking, she moaned again.

"Fuck, girl, you're killing me." She said, resting her forehead against the girl and grimacing.

She looked into Buffy's eyes, who had stilled her hand, staring back at Faith.

"Please." Faith said one last time.

Buffy was struck at the pure need she saw in those eyes and relented gladly. She took one hand and placed it on Faith's ass, positioning her over her right knee with the other. She began her rhythm again, slowly stroking the girl's cunt. Faith sat up slowly and gave Buffy the added advantage of raising as well, Faith now straddling her lap. She slipped two fingers inside the girl and felt her own pussy contract at the flood of wetness that hit her fingers. With her fingers, she pumped in and out of the girl slowly, mesmerized at Faith's face and small gasps. She kissed her mouth, Faith too turned on to return it with any real velocity, making it more sloppy and both girls wetter than before.

Chasing The Girl – Leia

When Faith bit her lip, Buffy decided staring at the girl was just as pleasurable, and she ran her thumb over her clit and was again rewarded with a 'fuck' followed by a long moan. They kept up the pace before Faith begin to hump Buffy's leg, pushing the girl's fingers into her deeper. Buffy held her ass firmer, grinding the girl on her leg, when she felt the familiar contractions, she leaned back even further giving a strong thrust with her leg.

Faith's breathing became irregular and she literally shoved herself against the girl's thigh faster and faster until she felt the orgasm race through her at a rate she had never experienced. She slowed her loud panting down and fell backwards off of Buffy, her eyes closed, hands in her hair. She was shocked when she felt the girl push her face into Faith's pussy, lapping at the juices. She was even more shocked as she grabbed the back of Buffy's head and pushed her pussy into her face, amazed at the amount of wetness she was producing. Within seconds she felt the contractions again, not as strong, but so fast that she couldn't quite believe she was coming again until it rushed through her. She slowed her breathing, afraid she would faint, and pushed a still greedy Buffy away from her cunt.

"Fuck, you gotta stop, B." She said, trying to catch her breath, "I...don't think...I can't."

Buffy smiled up at her, her face slick with the girl's come. "Can't what?"

"Shut up." Faith said, still trying to catch her breath. Buffy scooted up beside the girl and placed Faith's head on her chest. "It's okay, sweetie, take your time."

Part 25

Faith listened to Buffy's breathing, her head rising and falling softly with each breath.

When it was apparent to her that she had fallen asleep, Faith slipped out of Buffy's arms and off the bed. She looked down at the girl.

Buffy's hair was slicked off her forehead and her hands were lying on her chest. Her legs were spread and one knee was bent into the other. Faith was amazed at how Buffy was even asleep, when she noticed the wetness between the smaller girl's thighs. Still standing by the bed, Faith walked out of the room and went to turn off the lights and lock the doors, something she had totally forgotten in her haste to get Buffy to the bedroom.

When she was busy with the kitchen light, an idea came to her and she quickly got what she needed and headed back to the bedroom.

When she returned she noticed that Buffy had turned slightly in her sleep and her legs were now straight. Both of the girl's hands were on either side of her. Faith retrieved a piece of ice from the cup she had brought with her and carefully got back into bed. She placed both her hands on either side of Buffy's shoulders and ice in her mouth, started to work down the girl's body, not touching her except with the ice.

"Shit." She heard Buffy whisper, as the ice made contact with her nipple. Buffy looked down and saw Faith's head hovering above her, her mouth wrapped around her nipple, her fingers playing with the other. She kept eye contact with her as she quickly made use of the melting ice. Faith dipped down between Buffy's breast and quickly made a trail down her stomach before pushing the smaller melted ice into the girl's belly button.

"Fuck, Faith." Buffy breathed, grabbing the girl's hair and pulling her up to her mouth.

"That's the idea." Faith replied into Buffy's mouth before attacking it.

Chasing The Girl – Leia

She slid her tongue inside rubbing against the blond's. On top of it, around it. Buffy took the initiative and started sucking Faith's tongue deeper and harder into her mouth.

Faith stopped kissing and pulled her mouth away.

"No, my turn." She pouted. Buffy raised her head and pulled Faith's lower lip into her mouth, biting it gently.

"No one's stopping you." She smirked looking down. "Don't pout. It so doesn't work."

Faith rolled off of her completely and turned her head to Buffy.

"Fine," She tried. "be that way."

Buffy rose swiftly, straddling Faith's waist, pushing her wet sex into the girl's stomach.

"Meanie."

Faith could feel Buffy's slickness grinding against her stomach. She grabbed the girl's ass and slid it around. Buffy moaned.

"Whatcha want, B?" Faith smiled when Buffy leaned down closer.

"You know what I want, F." Buffy whined.

"You have to tell me." Faith said, hands still on her ass.

"Fuck you, Faith." Buffy smirked, rising. "I'll show you."

With that she straddled Faith's right thigh and pushed herself flush against it. All the while her hands worked their way through her hair, down her own chest, and to her breasts, which she grabbed roughly.

"You wake a girl up..." She said leaning over Faith. When the younger girl went to lick Buffy's nipple, she rose again, a piece of ice in her hand. "...get her hot. And then you tease." She ran the ice over her own breasts. Keeping eye contact with Faith, she moved her hand lower. Faith watched enraptured as Buffy slid the ice down and around her breasts and abdomen. She moved it to her pussy, sliding it around, before bringing it back up and slipping it into her mouth. She laughed at Faith's groan, her hands still on Buffy's ass.

"I guess I'll just have to take care of it myself." She said, as she slipped her own hand back into her pussy, sliding it around the folds.

Faith followed her hand with her eyes, stunned.

Buffy brought her hand back up and leaned over Faith, inches from her face.

"And I taste so good, see?" She said, thrusting her fingers into Faith's gaping mouth.

That did it. Buffy was not only pleased but stunned as well when Faith slid down beneath her at an alarming rate. She looked between her legs. Her knees were now straddling Faith's head. Neither girl was really touching the other.

Chasing The Girl – Leia

Faith made eye contact with Buffy, grabbing the hovering girl's hands and placing them in her black locks.

"Hang on."

Buffy moaned this time, and felt herself being lowered onto Faith's mouth. The first slip of Faith's tongue sent her spiraling and she slipped a hand out of her hair.

Faith stopped and mumbled into the girl's pussy.

"I said hang on." She removed one hand from Buffy's ass and maneuvered Buffy's hand back to her hair. Buffy groaned, but obliged, and Faith began an earnest attack of the girl's cunt. She licked from back to front and back down again, slowly, her tongue flat. She was amazed at Buffy's wetness and the slickness she could feel sliding down her chin. She sped up her pace, licking more vigorously, avoiding Buffy's clit. She stuck her tongue inside the girl's pussy, straight and hard, and Buffy breathed.

"Fuck, fuck, fuck." Became her diatribe, as Faith fucked her with her tongue.

When Faith felt the girl become wetter, her juices thicker, she raised Buffy off of her slightly and looked at her.

"Do you wanna come?"

Buffy looked down at Faith, seeing her own wetness glistening on the girl's face.

"Please, baby." She pleaded.

Faith's eyes grew darker as she pulled the girl's clit to her mouth. Sucking softly, she ran her tongue around both sides before finally attacking it. Buffy abandoned all hope of control as she unceremoniously grinded herself against Faith's face. Her mind switched from 'Damn, she's good' to "Fuck, I'm coming." which she voiced aloud.

Her breathing sped up and with one last downward thrust she felt her body contract.

Holding her breath, she released it in short raspy pants, Faith still licking. She finally fell backwards, between Faith's open thighs, and Faith moved on top of her.

"You okay?"

Buffy breathed more slowly. "Umm, yeah." She answered looking at the girl. She pulled her closer, kissing her mouth softly, tasting herself, licking it off Faith's face.

"I love you, Faith." She said, nestling the girl between her legs, her head against Buffy's neck. "You know that, right?" She smiled slightly when she felt Faith kiss her neck and nod.

"Sleepy, B." Faith whispered.

"Me, too." She said, wrapping her arms tightly around the girl's back, happy to have her weight on her as they drifted off to sleep.

Chasing The Girl – Leia

Faith pulled into the driveway and looked at the sprawling house. She sat in the car for a few moments, trying to control her breathing. Everything she owned was packed in the back seat or in the trunk. The sudden thought of actually having to unpack those things made her tired. 'I should have sold everything.' She thought, before getting out of the car.

She walked to the front and opened the door. "Knock. Knock." She said, to an apparently empty house.

'Great.' She thought. 'They're not here. Not that they fucking knew I was coming. Where they hell are they?' She walked inside and shut the door. Peering from room to room, she looked finally in the kitchen and out the back window.

Buffy, Kennedy and Rose were in the pool. Willow was lying in a lawn chair with an obnoxiously big hat on her head, laughing at the girls, who were throwing Rose back and forth playfully around the pool.

Xander was watching as well. "I know you guys are Slayers, so don't feel the need to remind me when I say this, but don't drop her, okay?"

Kennedy splashed water on him. "Well, we are Slayers, moron. We're not going to drop her. Are we, Buff?"

Buffy smiled, pushing Rose back to Kennedy. "I guess not, but you take the fun out of everything, Xander."

Rose was clapping her hands. "Drop Rosie. Drop Rosie." She sang. She reached for Xander, who took her from Kennedy's arms. She patted him on the cheek. "They not drop me. They love me. You love me, too?" She asked him, putting her wet little arms around his neck and kissing him on the cheek.

Xander squeezed her. "Oh, yeah. Everybody loves you, babe." He said, turning her around in his lap.

Rose looked up and through the window, pointing. "Faithy!"

Buffy smiled from the pool. "Yep. Faithy, too."

Rose barreled out of Xander's lap and starting running to the house. The others stood up quickly, trying to stop her from falling on the wet pavement.

Faith, who had been watching the proceedings from inside the house, saw Rosie coming and opened the door. She caught her just in time.

"Whoa, there, girlie. You happy to see me?" She asked, scooping her up and hugging her.

Rose was bouncing up and down in Faith's arms. "Mmm-hmm. I love Faithy." She said, kissing her on the face.

Faith swung her around in the air. "Good god, I missed you." She said, pulling her back into a hug.

Rosie squealed. "You always say that."

"It's always true. You're my number one, aren't ya?" She said, nuzzling the girl's wet neck.

Rose pulled away and looked at Faith. "I dive, wanna see?" She asked, scrambling out of Faith's arms and pulling her to the pool.

Chasing The Girl – Leia

The others had been staring at the display silently. They were all a little surprised at Faith's unannounced arrival. All Buffy had said, when she came back from Boston, was that "It went okay." But hell if they knew what that meant.

Buffy was watching as well. Equally surprised. Though she and Faith had had a real breakthrough in Boston, Faith had asked for some time.

"I just need to get a few things cleared away, sweetie." Faith had told Buffy, stroking her hair. "Just give me a few weeks."

It had not been what Buffy had wanted to hear, and she cried a little at the news. Faith assured her, time and time again, that it was not a rejection; but Buffy couldn't help the sinking feeling she'd get every time she thought about it. She had expected Faith to jump back on the plane with her. But she knew that Faith was being the rational one, and so she agreed, albeit a little sadly. It had not helped that she had not heard from the brunette since she got back, causing old feelings of insufficiency to resurface; but at least Buffy knew the reason now.

Cause here she was, two days later. Faith was here. Standing at the edge of the pool, ready to watch Rosie "dive."

"Hey." Faith said, her eyes on the blond, as she was drug to the pool.

Buffy smiled at her. Rose was busy still tugging on her arms. "Watch, Faithy." She said, getting in a little diving stance, knees bent, arms over head, she looked from Faith to Buffy. "Hurry up, mommy," She said, holding her pose. "catch me."

Buffy waded over to the side of the pool. "I'm hurrying." She said, still looking at Faith.

Rose peered over her shoulder. "Watch, Faithy." She said, and dove, or more like barreled, head first into the pool. She swam underwater for a few seconds, before coming up in Buffy's arms. When she rose, she brushed her hair out of eyes. "See me? See me?" She called, excitedly to Faith.

Faith looked a little stunned. "Wow, that was really good." She looked at Buffy who was busy getting out of the pool with the little girl. "I'm impressed."

Buffy smiled, grabbing a towel intent on drying Rose off. "I not through." She said, turning and jumping into the pool to Kennedy, who caught her effortlessly.

Buffy dried off and wrapped the towel around herself and walked towards the back door. Faith stood a moment until she turned around. "Faith?" She questioned.

The others looked around, not too sure what was going on. Faith gave them a small smile and turned around to follow the girl.